

# BANDWAGON

JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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GENTRY 1932

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RICE BROS 1935

## RICE BROS. CIRCUS

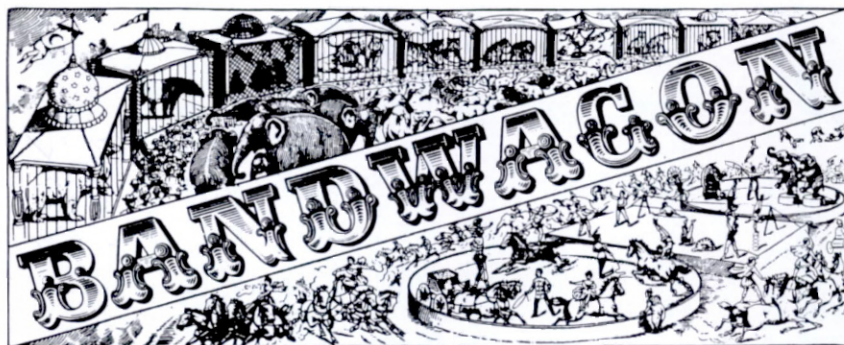


## RICE BROS. CIRCUS



JULY-AUGUST 1983





## THE JOURNAL OF THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Vol. 27, No. 4 JULY-AUGUST 1983

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### THIS MONTH'S COVER

The two colorful animal posters on our cover were used by the Rice Bros. Circus in 1935. Both are stock designs from the Erie Litho and Printing Co., of Erie, Pa.

The posters are half sheet uprights and are 42" high and 14" wide. The lithos carry the Erie logo and stock numbers 58 and 59. Erie offered eight different stock designs this size. One hundred assorted half sheets sold for \$7, including show name imprinted at top. Two hundred were \$11.50 and five hundred were \$25.00. The price of one sheets in 1935 was \$33.00 for five hundred.

### NEW MEMBERS

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### REINSTATED

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Mansfield, Ohio 44906

### CWM ENDOWMENT HAS BIG START

The second meeting of the Circus World Museum Endowment Committee was held in Baraboo, Wis., on July 11, 1983. Greg Parkinson, Endowment Director announced that over \$40,000 has been raised for the CWM Library and Reserach Center.

The goal for the first year is \$100,000 and Parkinson now believes that the amount will be raised. The eventual endowment goal is \$750,000.

A special mailing to members of the Circus Historical Society was very successful in fund raising.

The committee gave approval for an auction of circus materials to be held in 1984 during the centennial of the Ringling Bros. Circus. Further details on the auction will be given later.

### CORRECTION

Two errors appeared in the Great Van Amburg and Howes Great London article published in the May-June 1983 issue of *Bandwagon*.

The photo on page 3 identified as Bert Bowers is actually Joe Bowers, no relation. Joe Bowers was associated with the Victor Bendini horse troupe.

The photos appearing on page 9, 10 and 11 of the same issue show the parade of the Van Amburg show in West Point, Mississippi, not West Point, Georgia.

### CHECK YOUR ADDRESS

The post office has become very concerned that the zip codes on all addresses are correct. Corrections are coming back to the publisher with zip code changes. When this happens it costs us 25¢ and you your copy of the *Bandwagon*.

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# The Flamboyant Showman and His Six Title Circus

By Fred D. Pfening, Jr.

Even by circus standards the title Original Gentry Bros.—Bays Bros.—Rice Bros.—Dan Rice—Bray Bros.—Great Harris Bros., is a whale of a name for a show. At least that many titles were used by an outfit that had at least four different owners. It opened as the Original Gentry Bros. Famous Shows on June 1, 1931 and closed as the Great Harris Bros. 5 Ring Circus on August 6, 1938. During these eight depression struck years the show registered a colorful record in the history of motorized circuses.

This article concerns the man who toured the six title circus for much of its existence, a most unusual individual, Ray Marsh Brydon, who the *Billboard* called "one of the most colorful personalities outdoor shows business has ever known." The author began researching and assembling material on this flamboyant and often controversial man over twenty years ago, starting a few years after his death. Brydon, long known for his association with the odd, the unusual and the unnatural, is the individual who conjugated "International Congress of Oddities" as a high-fluting name for a plain old circus side show.

Ray Marsh Brydon was born in 1899 and was raised in Indianapolis, Indiana. At age eleven he joined the Sells-Floto Circus, and worked his way up on that show to become an usher. He was on various shows until 1920 when he opened his first

The first truck used by Ray Marsh Brydon on his store shows was this one in 1920. The title of his first show was Marsh's Modern Museum. All illustrations are from the Pfening Archives unless otherwise noted.

museum (a freak show in a downtown storeroom), in his hometown of Indianapolis. A photograph of his first truck shows it flashed with the name "Marsh's Modern Museum."



Ray Marsh Brydon, one of the most colorful personalities outdoor show business has known. Circus World Museum collection.

An article in the January 1935 issue of *Greater Show World* quoted Brydon's description of his first show operation. It states that an "enterprising young showman" conceived the idea of a perfectly equipped traveling museum featuring real attractions, playing week stands in large cities, always in desirable locations in the heart of the business districts.

He claimed his first show was flashed with \$3,600 worth of electric lights out front and a line up of attractions that included Zip, the original "what is it;" Bob Campbell, armless wonder; Pete Robinson, the skeleton dude; Baby Doll, fat girl; Gertrude Hall, Scottish giantess; Jack Lee, glass blower, with daughter Gertie Lee working the electric chair; Rubber Neck Joe Cramer; Keith Sisters Family Band; and the Swiss Family bell ringers.

The article states that Brydon's success was instantaneous, and within a few weeks he started another show a few blocks distant. But from a former associate came a different version. He stated that Brydon strong armed a downtown location on the square in Indianapolis, moving in after midnight and then secured an injunction to keep police from tossing him out. Supposedly he received a year and a day in the cooler for that one. This is but one of the many colorful stories about him.

During the 1920s Brydon operated store shows during the winter, and traveled with carnivals and circuses during the summer. While with the Johnny J. Jones railroad carnival he connected with Ike and Mike, identical twin midgets. Red Sonnenberg, a close friend of Brydon's, remembers him having the two midgets on the Sells-Floto show in 1925. Brydon arranged the marriage of Ike and Princess Marguerite in Forsyth Park, Savannah, Georgia, and boasted that

This truck, used first in 1934 to carry "Snookie" the chimp, was later used as the ticket wagon on the circuses operated by Brydon. Brydon's daughter Rae Rosalie is the child in the photo.





the nuptials attracted nearly half of the population. He later claimed that newspapers throughout the world printed 1,250,000 column inches on the wedding, and that the bills from clipping services became so large that he had to cancel them. Mike and Ike were photographed with many celebrities, and twice were breakfast guests of President Calvin Coolidge at the White House.

In 1927 Brydon was the manager of the Henry Pollie Circus, while at the same time operating a girl show, the Ike and Mike Midget show and a side show on the Ziedman and Pollie 30-railroad carnival. Sonnenberg visited Brydon while the carnival was playing the Mobile Alabama, fair, and remembered the shows as about the flashiest ever with a carnival. The Henry Pollie Circus was not blessed with Brydon's personal presence, and without his magic touch it folded its tents like the Arabs and wondered away into the night.

In 1928 Sonnenberg was with Brydon on the King Brothers' Walter L. Main Circus. Brydon had the pit show featuring Ike and Mike and a group of Hawaiian dancing girls. Jackie Stevens, a midget called Little Lord Leo, was also with Brydon, an association which lasted for over twenty years. According to Sonnenberg there were days on the Main show when the pit show grossed almost as much as the side show. The side show on Main was sloughed after the start of the night performance, but the pit show remained open to catch the blowoff following the evening show, this being the ideal time to work the joints and the "cooch dancers." Brydon was a wonderful orator and could turn a tip at any time. During the 1928 season on the Main show Brydon met Teresa Barron, who later became Mrs. Jess Adkins, Adkins being manager of the Kings' Gentry show at the time. Brydon married her in 1940 following Adkins' death. He was previously married to an attractive blond around 1930 who bore him a daughter. Although married to two different women, his real interest was in other men. During his many years in show business he always had a large gay entourage with him.

In his book *Freak Show Man* Harry Lewiston tells of Brydon, who Lewiston considered his arch-rival in the store show business. Lewiston gives the following description of Brydon: "He was tall, handsome and always dressed in ten-gallon Stetson hat and western boots. The amusing part about all this was that Ray was a homosexual and made no bones about it. His interest centered exclusively around handsome young men with perfect physiques, but there would never be a trace of feminine [sic] about them. Contrary to the usual in such



The Mike and Ike twin midget pit show on the Walter L. Main Circus in 1928 was owned by Ray Marsh Brydon. Red Sonnenberg photo.

cases, there just simply wasn't anything effeminate about the business at all."

Lewiston states it was probably difficult to understand how he could be on such friendly terms with his professional enemy. But he adds that was the nature of show business. Lewiston relates, "Once Brydon overheard me telling someone that I was having a time finding a vacant store in a certain large city. Brydon immediately came up to me and offered to help me out. In two minutes he was on long distance, and in five minutes he had arranged for a large store which was just what I was looking for."

Lewiston relates another anecdote: "Ray was the type who would make

All forty members of the Brydon store show are pictured in front of a downtown location in the fall of 1934. The use of the Robert L. Ripley name was unauthorized.



long distance calls on a pay phone. He would put in the original amount requested, and tell the operator to call him back when the conversation was over and tell him how much he owed. He might then talk for forty-five minutes, running up a prodigious bill. After he hung up, he would immediately leave, and the poor operator would call in vain for the rest of her money."

Some of Lewiston's true feelings about Brydon do come through. He says Brydon was ruthless in his dealings with people a good part of the time, often leaving performers broke and stranded in strange cities, firing them without notice, or telling them the next stop for his show would be one city, when in truth it was in just the opposite direction.

One of Brydon's performers gives another story. Dick Hilburn worked for him in the store shows and he reports that Brydon treated his help very well, putting them up in good hotels and fed them well, and even threw a party each week for all the personnel. Hilburn states that Brydon had an old man who stood at the door and welcomed people to the show, shaking hands with most of them. The man resembled Col. Sanders, and was dressed in a vest with a gold chain and watch. While Hilburn was with the show Brydon had three or four cars which transported the performers and staff, but was slightly on his uppers and did not have a truck to carry the stages and other equipment. He would hire a local trucker to carry the equipment to the next city. Following one winter stand in Monroe, Michigan, Brydon could not locate a truck and driver which would go through the ice and snow, so he just abandoned the equipment and hired a carpenter in the next city to build all new stages and equipment.

Not much is known about Brydon's activities in 1928 and 1929, but he surfaced in 1930 with an ad in the





Over twenty-five different styles of posters were used by the International Congress of Oddities. The amount of paper used by Brydon was equal to that of a circus.

January 4 *Billboard* wanting all types of people for the Best Bros. Circus. The ad stated that the show would open near Louisville, Ky., early in April. As he would do in his *Billboard* ads in later years, he listed wants for every possible circus employee. Two people mentioned in the ad and asked to write were Bennie Flower and Jimmy Woods.

A second advertisement appeared in the January 11, 1930, *Billboard*, this one thanking all of the well-wishers and stating that he had received 200 answers to his first ad. People must have written him the day they received the magazine to total that number of responses, or perhaps he was padding his part, a trait not unknown to Ray Marsh Brydon. In any event the 1930 Best Bros. Circus never got off the ground. A reference in a March 1930, *Billboard* advised that Jimmy Woods had purchased the Best show from Brydon.

During the early 1930s Brydon was associated with various side show and museum operators, making the store shows in the winter and traveling with carnivals in the summer.

Cash Miller was a prominent freak show operator. It is not known exactly when Brydon hooked up with him, but he was general agent for the Miller Modern Museum in November of 1932, an association which continued for another year. During the summer of 1932 Brydon had a girl review on the Pollie carnival.

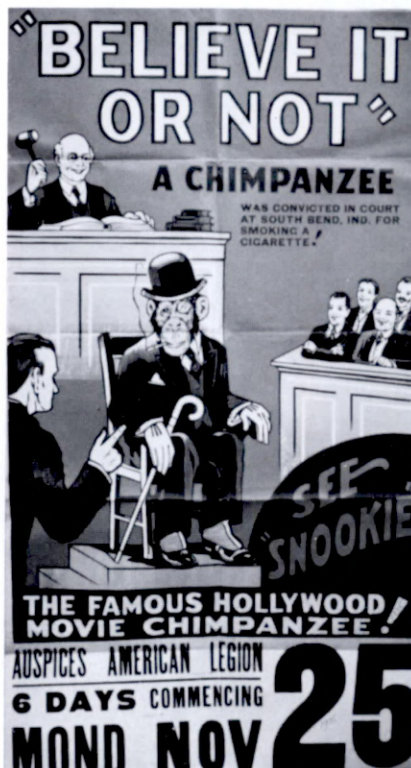
During the winter and early spring of 1933 Brydon continued as agent for

the Miller store show. This Miller unit opened under canvas with the giant Castle-Ehrlick-Hirsh railroad carnival in the spring under the management of Mrs. Miller. Brydon advised in a *Billboard* report that he would be joining the Famous Pollie Shows starting in March. Cash Miller turned up at the Century of Progress in Chicago, connected to the Ripley Believe It or Not Odditorium. The Ripley show was managed by the well known circus general agent Clint W. Finney. No further mention was made about the Famous Pollie Shows, or Brydon being with it during the 1933 season.

An extensive article that appeared in the *Greater Show World* in January 1935, states that Brydon was associated with the Ripley show at the Chicago fair in 1933. The *Billboard* in 1933 carried a regular column about the Century of Progress and there were references to the Ripley show as well as Clint Finney and Cash Miller, but no mention was made of Brydon. Following the closing of the Chicago fair Finney and Miller took the Believe It or Not show to Boston and other cities showing in downtown store rooms.

Brydon was still connected with Miller in November of 1933 as there was an ad in the November 25th *Billboard* for the Miller Modern Museum, with Ray Marsh Brydon as the contact. Their relationship soon ended. With Miller busy with Finney

Snookie, the movie chimp, was a long time feature with all of the Brydon shows.



Some of the paper used by Brydon carried only the "Believe It or Not" title. Bertha Curtis the fat lady appeared with him for many years.

and the Ripley show, Brydon marched out on his own, perhaps taking the freaks from the Miller Modern Museum with him.

It was in the December 23, 1933 *Billboard* that the first mention appeared of the International Congress of Oddities. Brydon was advertising for help under the new title. He was playing in Cumberland, Md., at the time. The next issue of the *Billboard* carried an ad by Cash Miller with a P.S. stating "Ray Marsh Brydon no longer with me."

Early in 1934 Brydon used a variety of titles on his store show. A herald from the Erie, Pa., date starting February 26, mentions the International Congress of Freaks, but the big type read "Believe It or Not." This herald reads as a typical Floyd King creation, and it was indeed produced by Floyd King for Brydon. No mention anywhere on the publication of Robert L. Ripley, since Brydon was bootlegging the Believe It or Not title. Part of the copy on the herald read, "Year's Outstanding Amusement Event! It affords me both pride and pleasure to announce the coming to this city of the famous Believe It or Not Odditorium of Living Freaks, Strange People and Curiosities gathered from inaccessible parts of the world. A majority of these strange people were brought to America for the Chicago World's Fair. As the Fair will be held again next summer, these remarkable and unbelievable oddities are being held intact during the winter, visiting metropolitan cities. In St. Louis, Cincinnati and Columbus hundreds



were turned away daily from the exhibit.—Ray Marsh Brydon, General Manager."

Even though the Untied States was in the depths of the great depression the public seemed to find an escape in visiting Brydon's museum. During the winter of 1933 and 1934 Brydon noticed in the *Billboard* that Floyd King was in Memphis, Tenn., between seasons as press agent for the Al G. Barnes Circus. He brought King to Lexington, Ky. as press agent for the store show. Between the two of them the additional publicity increased the grosses from around \$1,200 to \$1,800 a week. In a conversation with King some years ago he commented that Brydon laid in bed at night thinking of new ways to spend the money being taken in by the museum. One week he would buy a truck, the next additional neon signs, and on Saturday night would borrow money from the fat lady to buy gas to move the show.



This window card was used in great quantities to advertise the International Congress of Oddities.

Brydon used the Believe It or Not title on a large variety of posters, posting plenty of them in each city the show played. Meanwhile the Finney-Miller unit, authorized to use the Ripley name, also advertised the Believe It or Not title. Ripley was never successful in stopping Brydon from using the title.

A full page ad appeared in the April 14, 1934 *Billboard* listing all of the staff and attractions. The ad states that Marie Weeks had the cookhouse and was feeding forty people daily. Two weeks later another ad appeared wanting a boss canvasman for an 80 and three 40s. This ad also stated that Walter L. Main was the general agent and that a steam calliope was wanted.

There is a serious question as to Main being there or that a tent that size was being used. He may have thought seriously about buying a steam calliope, should one have been available.

In the spring of 1934 Brydon enlarged his fleet of trucks and buses and purchased outdoor equipment to present the International Congress of Oddities under canvas. The show carried a cookhouse and had an advance crew of three billers and one programmer (to distribute the heralds.)

As a boy the author can remember the Brydon show playing the Ohio State Fair, in Columbus, and the big publicity resulting from the closing of the show due to the objections of the fair management to a "half and half" appearing in the show. Viewing the physical layout of the attraction I was impressed with the number and flash of the trucks, the spread of canvas, including a cookhouse, and the giant doubledeck banner line.

In the spring of 1935 Ray Marsh Brydon became a part of the "Six Title Circus."

#### TITLE NUMBER ONE

The Six Title Circus opened on June 1, 1931, in Bloomington, Indiana, using the name The Original Gentry Bros. Famous Shows.

Henry B. Gentry, of the family who had operated four different railroad units of their dog and pony show in a single season at the turn of the century returned the famous name to a show owned by a member of the family. The Gentry title had been used nearly every year since 1900, but by other showmen since 1917.

Gentry had been associated with the Sells-Floto show as manager when it was sold to Mugivan and Bowers, and later served as the intermediary for Mugivan to purchase the Sparks Circus from Charles Sparks following the 1928 season. He managed the Sparks

This unusual light four wheeled trailer was the ticket wagon and office of the new Original Gentry Bros. Famous Shows in 1931.



show for the American Circus Corporation during the 1929 season, the only year under their ownership.

Henry Gentry's brother Frank was associated with him on the revival in 1931. The show traveled on twelve trucks, with three ahead, using an 80 ft. round big top with three 30 ft. middles. It carried no menagerie, and no traditional circus acts. The entire performance consisted of trained dogs, ponies, monkeys, goats and pigs. The monkey fire department and the high diving monkey were big hits in the show.

Photos of the show on the lot indicate that an annex was on the midway, but it appears to have been an animal show of some sort rather than the traditional side show with freaks.

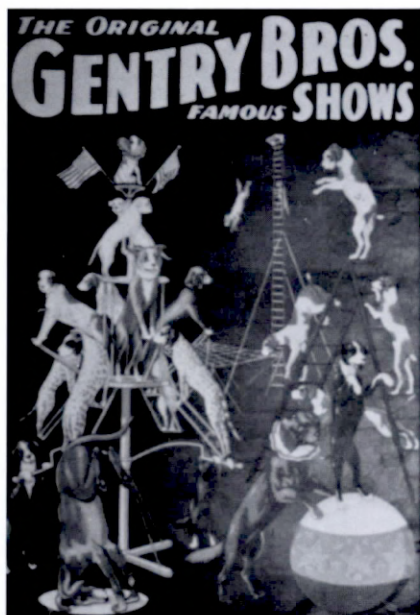
An article appearing in the *Indianapolis Sunday Star* on May 31, 1931, told of the framing of the show:

It was fifteen years ago that the Gentry brothers sold their interests, and when the new venture was started more than a year ago there was much wracking of brains to remember all of the dog and pony tricks that had thrilled children in across the nation.

Henry Gentry's first step was to begin the selection and training of a few dogs, ponies, goats and monkeys. He succeeded in locating and hiring William Carpenter, veteran boss hostler; Jim Williams, head canvasman; Fred Qualters, pony manager and Beverly White, publicity director.

Animals and assistants in tow, the showman went to Florida last winter and opened training quarters. He returned to Bloomington about a week ago and brought the whole troupe back, plus a number of new actors. And the additions also included a new tent, new seats, new trucks and equipment throughout. There is not a piece of paraphernalia in the outfit that had seen a professional performance, nor not an animal





that had ever gone through its paces before an audience.

Confusing the issue in 1931 was a second Gentry Bros. Circus, which had opened in 1930 under the ownership of Sam B. Dill, another former American Circus Corporation manager. A large truck show that presented traditional circus acts, it later became the Tom Mix Circus in 1935.

Dill opened the 1931 season using the Gentry title, but on May 15, 1931, changed the title to the Frank A. Robbins Circus, but some of the remaining Gentry paper on hand was used after May 15. Interestingly the Dill organization was playing in Indiana at the time the Henry Gentry show opened.

The *Billboard* covered the show in Valparaiso, Indiana, on June 27, and the correspondent reported:

There was no packed house at the matinee, just an ordinary crowd that is to be expected in these times. But they saw a mighty fine little show that gave them their money's worth and sent them away satisfied. Gentry has gathered together as fine a collection of beautiful ponies and well trained dogs as one would want to see. In addition to dogs and ponies there are monks, goats and pigs, all of which give an interesting performance.

Concert or after-show is an unusual one. It is given by the Godino Twins, grown together Filipino boys, and their wives. Boys do a monolog, dance, play saxophone and roller skate, while their wives sing and dance, dressed in Filipino grab. All in all they give an excellent performance.

The Gentry show has a splen-

The Gentry show used a wide variety of stock circus paper from the Donaldson Litho Company. Circus World Museum collection.

did outfit, including 17 Chevrolet trucks and a number of pleasure cars; new canvas, electric light plant, etc. Big top is an 80 with a 40 and two 30 foot middle pieces. Performers and staff are fed on the lot, cook-house is neat and clean and excellent food is served in abundance.

Henry Gentry is manager of the show, and his brother Frank, assistant. His son, Bob, is on the front door. Roy Rush is equestrian director. A.M. Uggen is manager of the Godino Twins, Simplicio and Lucio. Jim Williams is boss canvasman; Eddie Jackson on seats and William Carpenter is boss hostler. Lum Clark has a pit show on the midway.

The original Gentry Bros. Famous

A bill stand of Gentry paper advertising an August 1932 date of the Gentry show somewhere in Illinois.



Shows played New Philadelphia, Ohio on July 21, according to the *Billboard*, and at the time was moving on 20 trucks and was using an 80 ft. top with one 40 and two 30 ft. middles. Bert Rutherford was the general agent. (The number of trucks on the show varied from report to report.)

By early September the show was in Texas where it remained for nearly two months. A *Billboard* report from Marshall, Texas on September 6 advised that the show had two good houses there. Bandleader John F. Fingerhut had seven men on the bandstand. Doc Oyler had joined and was getting his share at the annex.

On October 26, the Gentry show opened a nine day engagement in Houston, Texas, which was extended to a successful 12 days on different lots around the city. A *Billboard* report stated that the entire show was handled by Roy Rush, trainer and equestrian director, with the exception of H.B. Gentry's assistance in handling the races and high jumpers. Workmen in bright clean uniforms made a pretty picture in handling the props. The program of animal acts went through without a miss, bringing real interesting attention and applause from the audience.

The show returned to winter in Bloomington, Indiana, following the 1931 season. During its life the show remained the same size and played the same basic route each season.

Opening the 1932 season early in April, the show moved south and was in Anderson, South Carolina on April 27. The show cancelled all dates in Tennessee due to high license fees. Gentry was in Richmond, Virginia, by May 25 for a four day stand, and by June 1 was in Washington, DC. A report from Washington stated that the show was moving on 12 trucks, plus three on the advance and that business in the nation's capital had been excellent, matinees being especially strong. Admission was 35 and 25 cents, with ten cents for the concert. Jackie Ray, Freckles of Our Gang movie fame was on the show and appeared in the concert.

The show went back to the middle west and was in Canton, Ohio, late in



June. The Gentry show played Cleveland July 4 to 12. Clint Finney was general agent at this time. The show moved into Illinois in August and moved into Texas for a long stay in September, playing Amarillo September 30 to October 1. On October 22 the show made San Antonio and was in Houston Oct. 29. The band was directed by Henry D'Armitt with ten men. The Texas admission prices were 40 and 25 cents.

The long regular season closed on November 16, in Victoria, Texas. But a special engagement was booked for Dallas from November 21 to 27. For this most unusual date the big top was erected inside the automobile building on the Texas State Fairgrounds. A number of acts were added and the band was enlarged for this date. The show returned to Bloomington to winter in the fall of 1932.

The Gentry Bros. Famous Shows opened the 1933 season on April 26 and 27, with the big top erected on the parade grounds of the University of Indiana, in Bloomington.

Phil Pike, who had handled publicity during the 1932 season was general agent in 1933. C. Thornton was the advance car manager with a crew of three. Del Church with a programmer made up the second advance car. Roy Rush had retired following the 1932 season. Frank Gentry worked the ponies and Veo Powers handled the dogs in the 1933 performance. Kapitan, a trained police dog was featured in the newspaper ads.

The show was in Indianapolis, Indiana, on May 8 and made a few stands in the Chicago area the first week of June. A circle was made going to Wisconsin, Michigan and Indiana, before heading back to Chicago for a number of different stands in the suburbs. It was then back to Wisconsin where a truck tipped over and was damaged in Theresa. A new big top arrived during the stand in Madison.

Gentry was in Minnesota in July and the biggest day of the season so far was in Austin on July 13. Nebraska was played in August, and by September 7 the show was back in Indiana, where they had a three show day on September 7. The show went



Henry Gentry, with his back to the camera, is pictured presenting a jumping greyhound dog act during a 1933 performance.

through Kentucky, Tennessee and into the Carolinas, finishing the season in Alabama. During the 1933 season the price of admission was 25 cents to all. After playing in fifteen states in 1933 the show made its winter quarters in Mobile, Alabama.

The Gentry show opened its 1934 season in Mobile on April 6, with a five day stand, and then moved into Mississippi and Louisiana, making a week stand in a couple of different locations in New Orleans from April 15 to 21. It moved north through Tennessee, Kentucky and was in Pennsylvania by the end of May and in Reading, Ohio on July 28.

On July 10, 1934 the show was in New Philadelphia, Ohio. One of the most extensive *Billboard* reports of the 1934 season was written from this town. The article included the following information. Henry B. Gentry reported that the show was experiencing its best season in many years, moving on 20 trucks, trailers and private autos. The big top was an 80

with one 40 and two 30 foot middles, seating 2,000, with blues on the ends and starbacks on the front and back sides. The performance was running an hour and a half with Veo Powers presenting the animals. There were 20 ponies and 60 dogs in the show, as well as goats, pigs and monkeys. The Steiner Trio, aerial on horizontal bars; and the Powell Family, tight wire artists, provided breaks for the animal performers. Both of these groups also presented a second act. The final number of the main show was the fire scene, with ponies, dogs and monkeys. Kapitan the trained dog was featured in the concert, which ran 20 minutes, and went for a dime. All kiddies remaining for the aftershow were given free pony rides following the concert.

The staff listed in the July article included: Henry B. Gentry, manager; Frank H. Gentry, front door and legal adjuster; Bert Rutherford, general agent; W.D. Story, treasurer; Veo Powers, equestrian director.

Gentry played Columbus, Ohio, August 6 to 11, 1934, making four different lots in various parts of the city under the sponsorship of the *Columbus Dispatch* newspaper. The author, age nine, attended a night performance on a lot across from the Ohio State University football stadium, where St. Johns arena now stands.

Up to this time I had never seen a truck circus, let alone one that had mostly animal performers. The show carried no folding chairs, and starbacks were used opposite the rings. My memory of the show is one of dozens and dozens of dogs, and lots of ponies. The monkey fire drill sticks in my mind.

The show was in Fulton, Kentucky, on August 27 and by September 13 it was in Corsicana, Texas. The usual Houston, Texas, stand was for four days late in September. The Gentry show finished the 1934 season on October 20, in Bloomfield, Indiana, and

The dog truck of the Gentry is shown in a photo taken in Galveston, Texas, September 22, 1934.







went into quarters at Bloomington.

The closing of the Original Gentry Bros. Famous Shows in the fall of 1934 brought an end to the use of one of the greatest and longest used titles in American circus history, although Jimmy Woods did revive the title some years later for one season on the west coast.

Henry Gentry placed an ad in the November 24, *Billboard* announcing an auction to sell 17 ponies, one mule, 45 dogs, 10 monkeys, 4 goats, 2 pigs and 15 trucks. The *White Tops* later reported that the sale was held on December 6, but not one bid was received. No news was reported regarding the Gentry show through the early part of 1935.

## TITLE NUMBER TWO

By early spring of 1935 a second name, Fred F. Bays, became part of the saga of the "Six Title Circus."

There were three Bays brothers in a prominent Sullivan, Indiana, family, Fred Fenton Bays, Lee Fenton Bays, both lawyers, and Harold Fenton Bays, a U.S. Army Colonel and professor at Culver Military Academy. Fred Bays had the circus bug at age sixteen and spent three weeks on the original Gentry show, before being retrieved by his father.

A good friend and family employee, Russell Ellingsworth, of Sullivan, informed Bays that he was going to the Hagenbeck-Wallace Circus winter quarters in Peru, Indiana, to train horses. Fred Bays followed him and slept in the quarters bunk house with his friend for a few weeks.

Fred Bays attended Culver Military Academy as a youth, among those in his class were H.C. "Doc" Ingraham and Sam B. Dill. Mr. Bays, a lawyer, was a life-long resident of Sullivan, and at one time served as its Mayor. He was very active in state politics and for six years he had served as prosecutor of the 14th judicial district at Sullivan.

The midway of the Bays Bros. Circus on opening day in Sullivan, Indiana, June 8, 1935. The International Congress of Oddities bannerline made a great flash.

Doc Ingraham, in a letter written to the author in 1961, advised that Bays had backed Sam B. Dill in framing his large Gentry Bros. truck circus in 1930, and had long been interested in circuses. According to Ingraham, Bays lost a "wad" when he gave further financial help to Dill in 1933, the season before Tom Mix joined the then Sam B. Dill Circus.

Fred Bays and Ernestine Myers opened a dancing school in Terre Haute in a two story building in the vicinity of where the Indiana State University is now located. Miss Myers used the downstairs and Bays used the upper floor for the training of trapeze and other aerial circus acts.

Fred F. Bays, right, is shown with circus fan Don Howland on the Bays lot on opening day. Circus World Museum collection.



Daring Mary Miller, who would later appear in Bays circus was trained here. Some of the acts trained in Terre Haute appeared with the Sam B. Dill Circus.

The time spent traveling with the Dill show further heightened Bays interest in the circus. When he heard the Gentry show was for sale in Bloomington it fit right into his plans to organize his own circus. Bays and his friends Russell Ellingsworth went to Bloomington and arranged to take over the equipment.

A document in the files of the Circus World Museum gives the detailed financial arrangements transferring the Gentry equipment to Bays. On May 8, 1935 a petition was filed in the Monroe County Circuit Court by Walter W. Allen, Receiver for Gentry Bros. Famous Dog and Pony Shows, Inc., for Bays Bros. Circus Inc., as an Indiana corporation to lease the property of Gentry Bros. Famous Dog and Pony Shows Inc. for \$100 per week, payable \$1200 cash and the balance at the rate of \$100 per week until the total amount of the purchase price of \$6700 had been paid. When the full amount had been paid Allen was to execute a bill of sale for the property free of any liens that might have been created prior to May 8, 1935.

The inventory of the Gentry equipment filed with the court included the following: one 80 foot round top with one 40 and two 30 foot middle pieces, one pad room 40 by 60 feet, one tent approximately 30 by 40 feet, 45 trained dogs, 17 trained shetland ponies, one bucking mule, 10 trained monkeys, reserved seats and blue seats, one Chevrolet Coupe used in the advance, and 13 Chevrolet trucks and 5 trailers.

Bays' purchase of the Original Gentry Bros. Famous Shows equipment was announced in an article appearing in the Bloomington, Indiana, newspaper on May 9, 1935. The article read as follows:

The Gentry Bros. Famous Dog



and Pony show moved out of Bloomington today, to get ready for another chapter in its history. It was purchased by Fred and Lee Bays of Sullivan, Indiana, and will become a featured part of the Bays Bros. Three-Ring Circus which will go on the road about June 1.

Walter W. Allen, local funeral director, sold the show at a private sale as receiver for the show but did not announce the price. Today the work of moving out the physical property—14 trucks, the trailers, the dogs, the ponies, the other animals, the canvas—began.

H.B. Gentry, one of the founders of the show, was on hand all morning, while trucks were being hauled from the big barn at the end of Walnut Street and made ready for the trip.

Veo Powers will stay with the show as ringmaster and dog and pony trainer. The new outfit will include all the acts necessary for a good circus.

On the same day an article appeared in the *Sullivan Daily Times* announcing that a circus was to be started in their midst. In a telephone conversation from Indianapolis, Bays told the *Times* he had consummated a deal to purchase the Gentry show and would be bringing it to Sullivan. He advised the paper that he would be buying other circus equipment and go on the road as the Bays Bros. Circus. He stated further that he planned to have one of the finest shows of its type and size in the United States. Articles of incorporation were filed in Indianapolis under the name Bays Bros. Circus Inc.

While in Indianapolis, Bays made contact with Ray Marsh Brydon, whose International Congress of Oddities was showing under canvas in a local amusement park. He arranged to have the Brydon unit as the side show of the new Bays Circus.

The document from the Circus World Museum also listed additional equipment Bays added to that from Gentry. The list included, one cook house tent complete with poles and side wall, tables, range, cooking utensils, knives, forks, cups, saucers and dishes, 5 trucks, one tractor and semi-trailer, making 6 in all, three of the trucks being built into cages, one truck being used as a horse truck, one truck being used as a property truck and the semi-trailer being used to carry elephants, also one light plant, one 60 foot round top with 30 foot middle complete with side wall and all poles, also the following wild animals: two tigers, one hyena, one bear and one lioness.

Other equipment added by Bays included: two sleeping trailers, used by



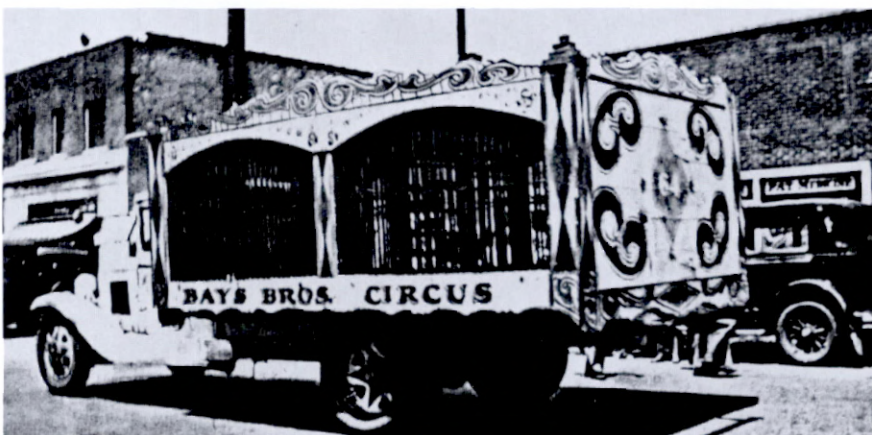
The John Robinson elephants posed with Sullivan, Indiana, newspaper people just before the show opened. John G. Robinson, Jr., holding hat, is on the left and Fred F. Bays, holding hat, is on the right. Bill Milsap collection.

performers; a new marquee; two new 30 foot middle pieces; 200 feet of new 10 foot sidewall; two small pony drawn cages; new electric chandeliers for the midway; a quantity of new electric cable and one semi-trailer water wagon with tank. This made a total of twenty trucks on the Bays show.

Having a new circus built in its backyard was quite exciting for the Sullivan community and there were frequent stories in the local paper. One article reported that Fred Bays was an experienced circus man having managed the Sam B. Dill Circus during the summer of 1933. Actually he had probably been traveling with the show seeking repayment of his loan to Dill.

On May 28 the local paper announced the Bays show would feature the

One of the three Bays cage trucks is shown in the parade on opening day in 1935. Circus World Museum collection.



three John Robinson Military Elephants; the famous Gentry Bros. dogs and ponies; Lillian St. Leon, foremost lady rider; the Six Orientals, Arab acrobats, Hoagland's dancing and high jumping horses; the Olympians, 12 lady aerialists; and Daring Mary Miller, wire artist. The paper also advised that animals had arrived from Texas as well as from the Cincinnati Zoo. Walter Jennier and his wife Ethel had left the Tom Mix show and driven 3,000 miles to join the show.

The opening date was set for June 8, 1935. The Robinson elephants arrived a few days ahead and on June 5 they paid a visit to the local newspaper office, where they were photographed with the paper's staff. Also appearing in the photo are Fred F. Bays and John G. Robinson, Jr., owner of the elephants. Lithographs advertising the Bays show appear in the windows of the building in the background of the photo.

The Bays Bros. Circus was to be a five ring presentation. To showcase his performance Bays purchased two additional 30 foot middle pieces. Photos taken inside the big top indicate it was white and was decorated with stars around the quarter poles.



The stars and the crown of the top probably were in red. Photos of the Bays motorized equipment indicate that the trucks were white with very attractive lettering and scroll work in red outlined in another color. The local paper stated that he had hired the same circus painter from West Baden who had decorated and lettered the Sam B. Dill show. The Bays trucks look similar in lettering to those used on the Dill show. There was also reference in the Sullivan paper that Bays had purchased some animal cages from the West Baden quarters and remounted them on trucks. This is doubtful. The cages shown in photos of the Bays parade look to be of lighter construction than those used on rail shows. The cages may have been constructed by the same man who built the cages of the Sam B. Dill Gentry show in 1930, they look much like those used by Dill.

On opening day the Bays Bros. Circus looked most impressive on the Pavilion Park lot in Sullivan. The Brydon side show was presented in a long canopy style tent, using an extensive line of twelve banners, six on each side of the entrance banner which read "Bays Bros. Circus Presents International Congress of Oddities Featuring the Sensational Robert Ripley Believe It or Not World's Fair Freaks." A large, double wide, double high banner on one end advertised Snookie, the movie chimp from Hollywood, a like sized one on the other end was lettered "A Century of Progress Production—3 Shows for the Price of One."

The performers in the side show were, Gene-Jeanette; Slim Curtis,

Three Bay brothers appeared with the title on all paper used by the show. This fine poster is from Donaldson Litho. Harold Dunn collection.

Skeleton man; Bertha Curtis, fat lady; Larry Johnson, sword swallower; Eva La Tour, snakes; Ruth Howard, giantess; midgets—Lord Leo (Jackie Stevens), Lady Ethel and Capt. Denny, and Snookie the chimp. Ray Cramer, who had been with Brydon since his store show days, was principal opener. Cramer was in later years superintendent of the Royal American Shows. Brydon carried a large amount of equipment, including buses to carry his people and a cookhouse to feed them.

The Bays menagerie was most unusual for it was housed in a 60 foot round top with one 30 foot middle.

Al McCabe was the show manager, James Williams, boss canvasman; Lewis Scott, electrician; and Guy Wible had the front door. Mervin Hollingsworth was bandmaster with 14 musicians. Veo Powers was dog and pony trainer.

Walter Jennier was equestrian director and his wife Ethel (age 20 at the time) presented her aerial act as one of the twenty-six displays in the performance. The clowns were Ernest Reynolds, Van Wells, George St. Leon, Albert Veroic, Howard Bryant and Jung Thomas.

The first *Billboard* reference to the Bays show was in the June 22 issue. This noted that W.D. Story, former treasurer of Gentry Bros. Shows, was now connected with Bays Bros. Circus in the same capacity. The short article stated that the show had opened at Sullivan, Indiana, June 8 to capacity business.

The Bays show stayed in Indiana for three weeks and was in Terre Haute on June 24. A report sent to the *Billboard* from there quoted Fred Bays telling that the show had had a big day there, with a straw house at the matinee, plus an extra afternoon show, and a capacity night house. The big

top had six poles and the performance was given in three rings and two stages, featuring the Riding St. Leons, Hoagland's horses, Gentry's dogs and ponies, Six Arabs, Eight Olympian Girls, John Robinson's elephants and Daring Mary Miller. Visitors in Terre Haute include Henry Gentry and Walter Allen.

Continuing the Indiana route the show was in Peru on June 29, from which another *Billboard* report was sent. This article advised that the show was moving on 60 trucks and house cars. Fifty officials and performers, in special buses, motored to St. Charles Catholic Cemetery, where memorial services were conducted in honor of the late Jerry Mugivan. Lee Bays eulogized Mugivan in a short address and music was played during the services by Mervin Hollingsworth and the circus band. Due to poor advance work the show did not do a large business in Peru. This was the first reference to discouraging business, in spite of Fred Bays earlier reports to the *Billboard* that the show was doing big business.

It was noted that Mrs. Sam B. Dill would shortly become the auditor. Sam Dill had died in 1934 and his widow played an important role later with the Bays show.

Business in general had not been good and Ray Marsh Brydon had had enough. He left the show in Peru, taking his cookhouse with him, heading for the Chicago area where he stated he would be playing parks and fairs.

The Bays show played Mishawaka, Indiana, on July 1 and then moved into Michigan at Three Rivers. Four days

Daring Mary Miller's name was imprinted on this stock Donaldson lithograph used by the Bays show. Circus World Museum collection.





later the circus was in Ann Arbor on July 6, where it closed.

There were conflicting reports on why the show folded, one stated that a storm had wrecked the big top. But it is clear that the twenty-five cities played by the show had not produced enough business to keep it afloat. As is very often the case when a show closes, the advance promotion was not successful. The show was booked to play six additional Michigan cities and these were listed in the route department of the *Billboard*.

The show made the 425 mile run back to Sullivan in two days. The menagerie animals were left at the Cole Bros. winter quarters in Rochester on the way back. The St. Leon Family went East to join the Walter L. Main Circus, operated by Honest Bill Newton. The John Robinson Military elephants were quickly booked on fair dates. Fred Bays announced that the advance would be reorganized and that the show would reopen in a few weeks.

Fred Bays' first venture into the circus business was not the only one to feel the pangs of the depression during the summer of 1935. Harry Chipman had closed his World's United Shows after a week or so in the Los Angeles area, stating that business had been disastrous. The King Cole Circus lasted only a few days in the Washington DC area. J.J. Evans had opened a new show in the Massillon, Ohio, area and it closed after several weeks. Phil Isley's Bailey Bros. Circus folded after three months on the road, but was later sold to Harley Sadler and reopened under his name. The Gorman Bros. Circus closed in August.

Even the Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty Circus was forced to retrench on July 20, in Cumberland, Maryland, sending two stock cars, two flats and one sleeper back to the winter quarters in Rochester, Indiana. Included in the equipment returned was the Allen King wild animal act in three cages and nine elephants. Jess Adkins and Zack Terrell had been on a elephant buying spree earlier in the year and had a total of twenty-nine. Seventeen elephants remained on the Cole show, six had remained in the quarters after the show opened.

### TITLE NUMBER THREE

After returning to Sullivan, Bays set to work to reopen the show. A most interesting scenario developed bringing other well known circus people into the picture.

Bays made contact with Adkins and Terrell, who were anxious to find a place for Allen King, who they had under contract for the full season. A deal was made sending King and his wild animal act, six elephants and six menage horses to Bays to appear in



The Bays big top canvas semi-trailer doubled as a float in the parade in Sullivan. Circus World Museum collection.

the reorganized show. Over the ensuing years there has been speculation that Adkins and Terrell may have furnished some additional financing to reopen the show. It is most doubtful that additional money came to Bays from the Cole show owners because they had spent large amounts of money in purchasing circus equipment to frame the Cole show, and business on the show being bad was indicated by the cutting of the train from 35 to 30 cars.

Prior to the opening of the Cole show there had been suggestion that Allen King had been hired to appear on a truck show to be operated by Adkins and Terrell in addition to the large railroad circus. King had appeared in 1934 at the Live Power

Allen King and his wild animal act were featured on the Rice Bros. Circus during the 1935 season.



Show, sponsored by the Standard Oil Company of Indiana, at the Chicago world's fair, managed by Zack Terrell. The truck show with Allen King was to have been sponsored by Standard Oil. There must have been some validity to the story as the two had contracted with Clyde Beatty to present a large wild animal act on their railroad circus and would not have needed a second, lesser known, trainer. Adkins and Terrell must have had some assurance that the Standard Oil deal would go through, or they would not have signed Allen King.

John Van Matre in an article in *Bannerline* on the 1935 show stated that it was his understanding that Jess Adkins suggested that a new and more familiar title be selected for the show. In any case the title was changed to Rice Bros. Circus. On some advertising the title was listed as Rice Bros. 3 Ring Circus and Allen King's Gigantic Trained Wild Animal Exhibition. Frequently in circus history a title is selected because there is a supply of lithograph paper available on printer's shelves for an inactive title at a reduced price. This was not true in this case, as the show used mostly stock sheets from the Riverside Printing Company of Milwaukee, and the same designs were used the next year with a different title.

The first reference to the new title was made in a call advertisement that appeared in the August 17 *Billboard*. Working men, bandmen, big show performers, side show and pit show people, ticket sellers, butchers and ushers were told to report to Sullivan, Indiana, for the opening on August 16 of the Famous Rice Bros. Circus, with "Allen King and his cage of Fury, the undisputed, outstanding feature of the 1934 Century of Progress." Listed at the bottom of the ad were Fred F. Bays as operative manager and, back in the fold, Ray Marsh Brydon, general superintendent. An interesting note about this *Billboard* ad, right above it was an ad for people to join the Harley Sadler's 3 Ring Circus, the





other 1935 circus to reopen under a new title.

The Rice Bros. Circus opened in Sullivan, Indiana, on August 16, 1935. The show was given in three rings under an 80 foot top, with one 40 and two 30 foot middles.

The big feature was the Allen King wild animal act, with five male lions, three females, two tigers and two black panthers. The King act closed the performance, it is not known if the steel arena remained up during the complete performance prior to his act. Veo Powers presented several dog and pony acts, assisted by Gertrude Scott, Marion Graves and Gladys Thomas. A number of acts including dancing, tumbling, swinging ladder, web and pyramid, were presented by the Six Olympians. Daring Mary Miller, one of the Olympians, did a dancing act on the low wire. Jim Reynolds presented one three elephant act and Don O'Connor the other. Will Parish, Murrell McChesney, Russell Ellingsworth, Gertrude Scott and Veo Powers appeared in the menage horse act. Russell Ellingsworth worked six high school horses. The clowns were Jimmy Thomas, Ernest Reynolds, Tom Hibbard, Van Wells, and Happy Kellens. Bob Printy wrestled in the concert.

Brydon's International Congress of Oddities' long bannerline made a big flash on the midway. The side show personnel included most of the people who had been with Brydon on the Bays show. Added were Sig Arcarus, flaglot player and six dancing girls, who also appeared in the blow off. Brydon used a pit show style tent and the heads of the performers were visible from outside the tent. This same

**The ticket wagon and marquee of the Rice show is pictured in Chattanooga, Tenn., on September 16, 1935.**

style side show tent was used on the Tom Mix Circus that same year. Ray Cramer was in charge of the front.

Brydon operated a second side show on the other side of the midway, called "Jackie's Jitney Show." The attractions in this show included a sword box, Rube Delane with magic, Mable Heath telling fortunes, a half and half, a pigmie glass walker and a punch and judy act. Deacon Albright was on the front door.

Bill Linderman of the Seils-Sterling Circus was on hand for the opening. In Loogootee the second day, visitors included Mrs. Sam B. Dill, Al and Pete Linderman, of Seils-Sterling, E.E. Coleman and Karl Kencht.

The show was routed south and was in Carrollton, Kentucky, on the 20th where several members of the *Billboard* staff visited. Their report appearing in the August 31 issue follows: Business in Carrollton was light, but the show officials reported that business had been good in the towns since opening. "The show is moving on 64 motor units, and is carrying six elephants, one camel, 17 ponies, six menage horses, 50 dogs, 10 monkeys, six male lions, one female, three tigers and two black leopards." Allen King headed the parade driving a specially painted auto coupe given to him by the Ford Motor Company. (King had the car with him on the Cole show earlier.)

**The entire Rice Bros. Circus on the Chattanooga lot in September of 1935. The show appears to be traveling on around 20 trucks.**

The march included over twenty units, including all caged animals, horses, ponies, elephants and lead stock. A steam calliope was in the traditional last place. Deacon Albright was with the show as calliope player. Although not stated in the *Billboard* report it is thought that the steam calliope owned by E.E. Coleman, of Dayton, Ohio, was on the show. Coleman had visited the show a day after the opening. This instrument was on Parker & Watts in 1938 and later on Dailey Bros., and Cristiani Bros.

The staff of the Rice show included the following: Fred F. Bays, manager; Allen King, equestrian director; W.W. Clark, agent; Mike Lyons, advertising car manager; William Story, treasurer; John Seawell, front door; William Rawls, reserve seats; Ray Marsh Brydon, general superintendent and side show manager; Forest Foote, directing a nine piece band; Bill O'Day, boss canvasman; John Rose, boss animal man; Jim Reynolds, (from the Cole show) in charge of the elephants; William Heath, announcer and ticket seller; Mr. and Mrs. Chuck Langford, candy stands; and Jim Williams, cook-house.

The legal adjuster was Howard King. King's brother Floyd was the general agent for Cole Bros.-Clyde Beatty. The two King brothers had together operated the Main and Gentry rail shows in the 1920s. In 1923 the Kings had used the Rice Bros. title on their two car show. Howard King operated a truck circus in 1934 that used the Rice title.

John Seawell, mentioned earlier, was on the show representing the Adkins and Terrell interests. Seawell was in the office of the Clyde Beatty-Cole Bros. Circus in the 1970s and in a discussion with him at that time the author was advised that it was Seawell's job to collect the weekly amount due the Cole show and to forward the money to Adkins and Terrell.

The Rice show stayed in Kentucky until September 4, when it played Hopkinsville. It was the day before that Allen King and Ray Marsh Brydon bought the show from Bays. The *Billboard* of September 14 carried an article reporting the transaction. It reads:

Yesterday between shows at Russellville, Ky., Fred F. Bays sold in its entirety the rights,







This small pony cage carried a goat in the 1935 Rice Bros. Circus parade. Babe Woodcock collection.

title and all equipment of Bays Bros. Circus, Inc. and Rice Bros. Circus, Inc., to Allen King and myself, Brydon wired. It took a lot of nerve to close a \$17,000 deal in a driving all-day rain-storm on a lot that was a sea of mud, but we are firm in our belief that we can make a success of it.

Already new equipment is on its way, a grand new power plant from Ford Motor Co., a gift to Allen; two new advance trucks from Goss Chevrolet Company to be delivered in Nashville on September 9, and new float curtains for the parade from Driver. The title will remain the same for the remainder of the season. Show is routed through Mississippi and Louisiana.

Getting clear title to the show was a bit more complicated than described in the *Billboard* by Brydon. Actually King and Brydon did not buy the show directly from Bays.

The previously mentioned documents at the Circus World Museum give some explanation to the selling of the show. One document titled "Bill of Sale For Circus," dated August 31, 1935 covers the sale of the show, but not to King and Brydon. Reducing the legalese to understandable English, here are the details of the transaction. For \$1.00 and other valuable considerations, Bays Bros. Circus, Inc. was sold to Nettie McCabe Dill. Mrs. Dill and her deceased husband Sam B. had been lifetime friends of Bays, and at one point it was stated that she was to be the auditor of the Bays show.

The former property of Gentry Bros. Circus, Inc. which was now with Rice Bros. Circus, Inc. was still under the supervision of Walter Allen, as receiver. The unpaid balance on the purchase of the Gentry property was approximately \$5,500, and the back payments of \$600 were still due. Mrs. Dill agreed to immediately pay the back payments and to assume the un-

paid balance. She also agreed to put up bond with the Monroe Circuit Court for payment of the remaining balance. Bays Bros. Circus, Inc. also granted full title to all of the additional improvements that had been added to the circus. Some of the Bays property stored at the Cole Bros. winter quarters in Rochester was also in-



A small pony cage was used in the Rice parade in 1935. The former Gentry dog truck is behind it. Babe Woodcock collection.

cluded in the deal. After agreeing to these provisions Mrs. Dill was given title and immediate possession of all of the property. The amount of cash, if any, paid to Fred F. Bays is unknown, he may have only wished to rid himself of any liability connected with his circus adventure.

The second document at the Circus World Museum is the bond mentioned above. The condition of the bond was that Nettie McCabe Dill shall pay the balance due to Walter W. Allen as receiver of the Gentry property.

A further arrangement must have been completed between Mrs. Dill and Brydon and his partner, Allen King.

Brydon ran an ad in the September 14 *Billboard* with the headline—Rice Bros. Circus, Ray Marsh Brydon and Allen King, operative owners. After listing all of the reams of people wanted the ad stated "Don't be misled about this show, it's out of the turkey class now, Cole Bros. animals will remain. Thanks to our well-wishers on the purchase of combined Gentry, Bays and Rice Bros. Circuses."

Rice Bros. showed Nashville on September 9. A new Ford truck was received there equipped with a 100 gallon water tank, and a winch to load the canvas. New side wall from U.S. Tent and Awning was delivered there also. The show stayed in Tennessee until playing Chattanooga on September 16.

Allen King's return to Chattanooga was a homecoming, although born in Atlanta, Georgia, he had been raised in the Tennessee city. At age thirteen King had left home for Texas where he joined the Army in 1915. King fought in World War I, following his discharge from the Army he returned to Chattanooga, where he drove a taxi after which he drifted into the circus business. In 1923 he returned to Chattanooga as a wild animal trainer on

This herald used by Rice in 1935 is very similar to the one used by Cole Bros. Circus the same year. It has all the earmarks of a Floyd King creation.

**RICE BROS. 3 RING CIRCUS** Organized by DAN RICE IN 1852

NOW COMBINED WITH  
**ALLEN KING'S WILD ANIMAL EXHIBITION**

Direct from a conquering European conquest . . . . .

Vast zoological display of rare beasts, an outstanding educational feature of this great tented organization . . . . .

SEP 1, 1935  
Scores of performing wild animals presented in thrilling exhibitions by the famous RICE BROS. CIRCUS this season!

**STUPENDOUS DOUBLE MENAGERIE**  
Worth Traveling Many Miles to See This Mighty Zoological Congress!

BEFORE THE DOORS OPEN

LIONS  
TIGERS  
LEOPARDS  
PUMAS  
JAGUARS  
PANTHERS  
BEARS  
Elephants  
MONKEYS  
Apes  
CITRUS  
MONSTERS  
YAKS  
BABOONS  
SEA LIONS  
ZEBRAS  
form but a part of the immense ZOO

GOOD MORNING!

SEATS FOR 5,000 PEOPLE

Largest and Greatest Tented Exhibition To Visit This Section of The State

Beauty and The Beast

**GREAT STARS FROM ALL NATIONS.**

**ALLEN KING** And His Great Wild Group of Tamed Wild Animals

**6 OLYMPIANS** Europe's Greatest Favorite Acrobats

**MARY MILLER** Pet of the Champion Animal Trainer

**FLYING JORDANS** INTERPRET AERIALISTS IN WILD FLIGHTS

**FLORENZ FAMILY** HUNGARIAN STUNNERS

**GENTRY BROS.** Educated Dogs, Frolic Monkeys

**2** GREAT HERDS of Siamese, Asiatic and Indian Elephants, More Ponderous Pachyderms Than Ordinarily Carried With Ten Shows Including Mary, the Famous Dancing Elephant.

**GET READY FOR THE BIG HOLIDAY!**  
REMEMBER ALL THINGS PICTURED ABOVE AND MORE THAN CAN BE DESCRIBED ON A HUNDRED SIMILAR PAGES ARE ALL TO BE SEEN FOR THE PRICE OF A SINGLE ADMISSION TICKET.

GENERAL ADMISSION **.50** - CHILDREN UNDER 12 YEARS **.25**



GENERAL OFFICE AND WINTER QUARTERS  
EVANSVILLE, INDIANA

47th ANNUAL TOUR

MAILING ADDRESS  
BILLBOARD PUBLISHING CO., CINCINNATI, OHIO

THE INCOMPARABLE MIDGET TWINS  
"A BARNUM FEATURE WITH BEST"

**BEST BROTHERS CIRCUS**

ALL THAT THE NAME IMPLIES

EN ROUTE \_\_\_\_\_

BEST MOTOR SHOW  
IN AMERICA

MIKE & IKE

**Bays Bros. Circus**

Direction FRED F. BAYS

3 RINGS

2 STAGES

LEE COL. H.C. FRED

**RICE BROTHERS CIRCUS**

BEST MOTOR SHOW  
IN AMERICA

**RICE BROS. CIRCUS**  
AND  
**ALLEN KING'S**  
**Gigantic Trained Wild Animal Exhibition**

PERMANENT ADDRESS, SULIVAN, INDIANA

WRITTEN AT \_\_\_\_\_ 193\_\_

REPLY TO REACH \_\_\_\_\_ BY \_\_\_\_\_ 193\_\_

200 ACTS  
60 CLOWNS  
IMMENSE ZOO  
3 HERDS OF ELEPHANTS  
STREET PARADE - NOON  
TWICE DAILY 7 A.M. & 7 P.M.  
HOURS OPEN 10 A.M. & 7 P.M.

the Sells-Floto Circus. When the Rice show played his old hometown King was visited by three sisters and one brother.

In Tuskegee, Alabama, on September 27 Nellie Russell arrived from the Cole show to work menage and wild west, Murray Butterfield arrived from Lewis Bros. to work novelties, and Sam Emswiller and crew came on the show with an all new frozen custard outfit. Duke Kamaukia and his Hawaiian Troupe joined from the Al G. Barnes show and Tommy Comstock came on to play the air calliope. The show stayed in Alabama until October 22.

With other shows having closed many people drifted to the Rice show

The 1930 Best Bros. Circus letterhead featured Mike and Ike; it is printed in red, black and orange. The Bays Bros. 1935 letterhead is printed in red and black. Brydon first used his 1930 letterhead design for Rice in 1935. The bottom letterhead for Rice and Allen King is printed in black.

for the late season tour. Forrest Foote increased the size of the band and now had 12 men plus the air calliope. Howard King had left as legal adjuster and a couple of other men had filled the job during the season, before Bill Moore came to the job in October. The brigade under Bill Erickson now had a crew of nine. Deacon Albright was acting as press agent back on the show.

The show purchased two large semi-trailers from the Eli Bridge Company to carry the elephants. Charles Goss, of Standard Chevrolet Company of St. Louis delivered additional trailers and a tractor to pull the horse van.

The Rice Bros. Circus made 20 dates in Mississippi before closing on November 14 in Grenada. Jess Adkins was on the show the closing day and arranged for the return of the Cole property to Rochester, Indiana. The show went to Jackson, Tennessee, to winter in the fairgrounds there.

A baggage car containing the Allen King trained cats, consisting of 11 lions and tigers and two black panthers; two elephants and four menage horses, steel arena and other props arrived in Rochester on November 20. Allen King was in charge of the shipment and returned with the baggage car. Deducting the animals returned to Cole from those sent to the show in August it is clear that Brydon either purchased or arranged a further lease on four elephants and two menage horses, and possibly some other lead stock.

The November 30 issue of the *Billboard* carried the headline, "Brydon now owner of Rice." The article stated that on November 23 he had taken over Allen King's half interest in the Rice Bros. Circus. No details were given regarding the details of the transaction. The article further stated that the show was in the fairgrounds in Jackson and that it was an ideal place to winter with plenty of good weather-proof buildings, work rooms

A third litho printer furnished paper for the 1935 Rice show. This one was done by the Enquirer Printing Co. of Cincinnati, Ohio.

**RICE BROS. CIRCUS**  
WITH  
**ALLEN KING'S**  
**GIGANTIC TRAINED WILD ANIMAL EXHIBITION**



and wonderful stalls for the horses. Around 50 men were in quarters and the entire show was to be rebuilt for the 1936 season. New semi-trailers and trucks will replace the short wheel base trucks and a new 100 foot big top with three 40 foot middles will be used in 1936. Big Bill Erickson was the general superintendent of quarters.

The final *Billboard* report of 1935 appeared in the December 7 issue. It stated that the canvas had been dried out and stored, and that a building at the fairgrounds had been taken over and converted into a dining room and a clubhouse. The cat animals remained in their cages, which were parked in a heated building. W.D. Storey and Don Bain, chief mechanic, had just returned from Sullivan, Indiana, with a Big Eli semi-trailer loaded with poles, canvas, seats and small parade wagons, formerly used by Gentry Bros., two light plants and odds and ends of equipment that had been stored since the reorganization of the former Bays Bros. Circus. All of the trucks were jacked up on blocks in the Floral Hall, and the wheels and tires had been removed, along with the batteries.

Many people had been reengaged for the new season Daring Mary Miller, the feminine feature, and her troupe of eight girls, the Olympians, were in rehearsal daily working on a fine aerial ballet.

Brydon was on tour with his International Congress of Oddities store show, and was in continuous contact with the quarters. He had made a suc-



This Rice Bros. Circus poster was a stock sheet from Erie Litho Co.

cess in the circus business and had big plans for the future.

Many people responded to my letters and questions during the years of research on this article. A number have been mentioned in quotations. I am thankful for the information provided by Richard E. Conover, C.A. "Red" Sonnenberg, Georgie Lake and H.C. "Doc" Ingraham, all of whom have since passed on. I do thank Ray Cramer, Ted LaVedla, Gene Whitmore, Wes Herwig, Dick Hilburn, Joe

Bradbury, Bob Parkinson, Chang Reynolds and John Van Matre. A very special thanks goes to Bill Millsap of Robinson, Illinois, who made several trips to Sullivan, Indiana, and spoke with many people who provided information and material on the Bays Bros. Circus.

The history of Rice Bros. in 1936, Dan Rice in 1937 and Harris Bros. in 1938 will be covered in a second installment. If any readers have photographs or information on these later years of the Ray Marsh Brydon shows please contact the author.

## BILL KASISKA'S LETTERHEADS



The Cullins Bros. New Enormous Shows operated from 1899 until the early 1920s. Lew F. Cullins was the owner. This letterhead used in 1899 is printed in blue with the photos of the owners in sepia. The letterhead was designed and printed by the Cross Printing Co., Chicago, Ill.



# Emmett Kelly's Circus Art

Throughout his years of circus trouping — from 1921 with Howe's Great London Circus until 1954 with the Ringling show — Emmett Kelly pursued his favorite pastime of sketching circus scenes and designing circus letterheads.

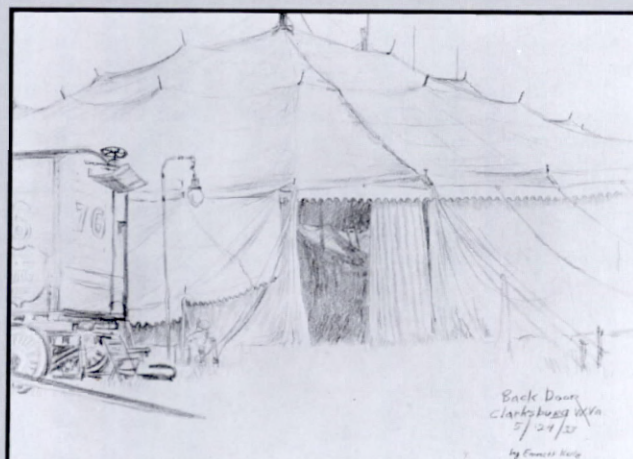
Fortunately, he kept many of the drawings which he made over the years — drawings that recall the bygone days of such great circuses as Hagenbeck-Wallace, John Robinson, Cole Bros., Bertram Mills and others. And his letterheads likewise recall many old-time circus acts.

Originals of the drawings, sketches and letterheads shown here are included in the Emmett Kelly Collection held by the Ringling Museum of the Circus.



John Lentz

EMMETT KELLY - 1944









# "YOU OTTO C. FLOTO"

## The Otto Floto Shows in Kansas

By Orin C. King

### Part III

#### Season of 1904

The great Floto Shows in 1904, enlarged to 18 cars, played no Kansas dates. The route for this season is complete, but a story in the *Topeka State Journal*, April 1, 1904, page 14, adds a new dimension.

The story, from New Orleans, April 1, states that K. Sugimoto, a 12-year-old boy, was attacked by a panther aboard the American steamship *Louisiana* while a unit of the Floto show was en route from Havana to New Orleans. In the hold of the ship were several lions and leopards. The panther seized the boy through the bars of its cage and held him until driven off by iron bars. The unconscious youth was treated by two doctors who were aboard ship.

On January 21, 1904, Willie Sells made an announcement that may be the seed of the Sells-Floto circus. Willie declared the intention of selling the animals and equipment of the Sells & Downs circus beginning February 5. He claimed that he and Martin Downs would devote all of their time to the management of an attraction at the St. Louis World's Fair. "The indications are not favorable for a good year in the circus business this coming season," Sells said, "and we are going to lay off." The sale was scheduled to continue until February 9. Interested persons could pick and choose from any part of the show.

On February 4, the *Topeka Daily Capital* reported: "DENVER CONCERN MAY BUY SELLS & DOWNS CIRCUS OUTFIT."

"It is probable that the Sells show will be taken in by the Floto dog and pony show, and that the Floto company will start a circus next season."

"This seems to have been the ambition of the Floto company managers, and they have sent a man here to be present at the sale of the stock which was owned by the Sells company."

Ben Wallace and Forepaugh-Sells also sent representatives.

The sale was typical of Willie Sells' duplicity. On February 5 the treasurer of Sells & Downs, Thomas R. Perry, announced:

"There won't be any sale. We have



This poster used by the Great Floto Shows in 1905 featured Christian Zeitz and his elephants. Pfening Archives.

sold all the stuff we want to. We are not going out of the circus business for a minute. That was just talk. What we sold was about \$5,000 worth of old equipment that we did not want. We are going to have a bigger and better show than ever before."

Willie Sells, in September, 1904, inherited an estimated \$87,000 from the estate of his mother, Sarah Ann Sells, who had been the sole heir of her husband, Allen. In February, 1905, Willie sold his interest in Sells & Downs to M.J. Downs and John Durham. Willie

Sells was now free to negotiate in earnest with H.H. Tammen and the Great Floto Shows.

#### Season of 1905

Harry Tammen was not long in outgrowing his dog and pony show in spite of the praise heaped upon it. There is a grandeur in bigness unachievable in a smaller enterprise, an increase in stature that sets one apart from his lesser contemporaries. James A. Bailey, Lewis Sells and the Ringling brothers occupied in the eye of the public a lofty munificence, possessing unlimited wealth, bestowing upon the world an elegance beyond the wildest dreams of the common man. They came mysteriously out of the darkness, shed their glory on the chosen town and vanished in the night. It was to this exalted circle that Tammen aspired.

It was a well-organized show that Tammen sent out in 1905. The performance was stronger, the labor force under experienced bosses was one of the best on the road, and everywhere the show went in Kansas the Great Floto Shows, clean and sparkling, and free of fakirs, was recognized as being truly "The Circus Beautiful."

The nineteen dates played in Kansas in 1905 started in Dodge City on July 10 and ended in Atchison on August 4.

Among the neglected heroes of circus history is the press agent. He is neglected in the sense that only anecdotes of his flamboyant behavior

William Sells, adopted nephew of the famous Sells brothers, joined the Floto show in 1905. This photo of Sells (standing) appeared in the 1905 Floto route book. Pfening Archives.





reach the reader of circus history and seldom does one find examples of his solid journalistic abilities. Three men are mentioned in the Kansas papers, "Punch" Wheeler, Melville A. Farris and Frank Robertson. The product of the press agent is even more neglected than the man himself.

The Great Floto Shows used 27 different stories during their tour of Kansas. The press agent's success fluctuated from town to town. In Hutchinson only one handout appeared in print, but in Ottawa, which in 1905 had three daily and two weekly papers, the *Daily Republic* ran an incredible 14 stories in advance of the exhibition. Farris had the job in Ottawa.

The story used most often, 14 times in 13 towns, concerned the parade line-up. Many other stories might contain slight deviations in the content, but this handout was the same, word for word, in every paper. When the opening paragraph refers to a "half million dollar street pageant" one wonders if Brinks had an armored wagon in the parade.

"The Floto Shows have always paid the greatest attention to their mammoth menagerie. As sight-seers will observe, for architectural beauty and design this show is unequaled. In giving a free, open-den half a million dollar street pageant Floto does not deal in enigmatical generalities, but is the only show that publishes an itemized formation of the circus parade.

"1. John Carroll, superintendent of parade, driving 'Pasha,' the \$9,000 Arabian stallion.

"2. Bugle corps; horses in full dress.

"3. Two mounted knights; advance horse guards.

"4. The Ben Hur Herd of royal blooded Arabians with the giant Royal chariot.

"5. First big band chariot, Sig. Zierke band master, with sixteen soloists.

"6. Queen Anne Tableau cage with the largest Bengal tigers in captivity.

"7. Carved Roman open lion den, contains 'Sultan' and his family.

"8. Fancy Kentucky saddle horses: Mrs. Carroll and Mrs. Rooney riding.

"9. Grecian four-horse open cage.

"10. The Hussar Quartette; saddle horses from the Floto stock farm, Denver.

"11. Big band chariot, eight Rocky Mountain mustangs driven by Carlo Carson, famous California driver.

"12. Royal India cage of monkeys, 57 varieties.

"13. Neptune chariot with the Continental Drum Corps.

"14. Foreign exhibit; Mexican Vaqueros, etc.

"15. Tableau band car, eight horses with outriders and costly trappings.



A small bandwagon carried sixteen musicians and was pulled by six horses. Kansas Collection, University of Kansas Libraries.

"16. Miniature Happy Family Van, drawn by four camels.

"17. Oriental tableau car, drawn by the only Brahma bull ever harnessed.

"18. Children's menagerie cage, eight ponies driven by Master Tony Ross, formerly jockey to King Edward.

"19. Italian veranda cage of Llamas from the Forbidden land.

"20. Royal India Zebu carts.

"21. Oriental band; Shetland team.

"22. Eight of the Sultan's favorites; camel trip across the desert.

"23. Herd of Asiatic trained camels, the largest ever captured.

"24. Children's annex; Australian hammock den of kangaroos; eight ponies from Floto's Shetland farm, Denver.

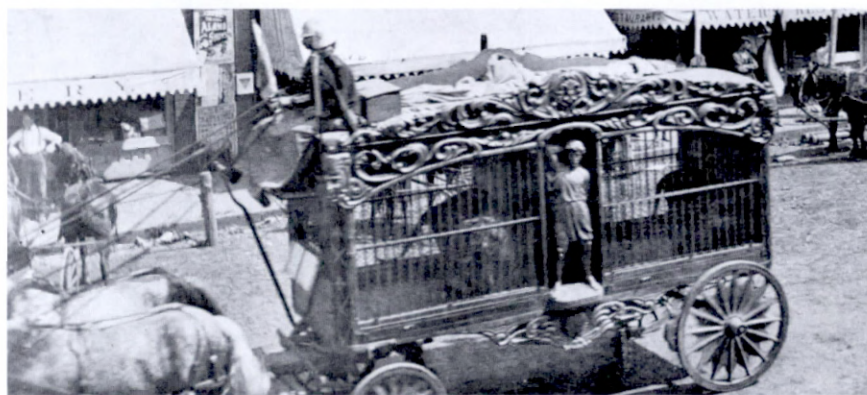
"25. Queen of the parade in embossed solid copper Houdah from Bombay, India, introducing 'Mamma Mary' the largest elephant in American.

"26. 'Trilby' trick clown elephant.

"27. Open leopard cage, mounted on the educated elephant Frieda, and the great Floto herd of performing elephants.

"28. Patrol wagon with funny clown chorus.

This large carved lion den is shown in the parade in Horton, Kansas, August 7, 1905. Kansas Collection.



"29. The comedy bicycle riders.

"30. Grand German orchestral calliope, tuned to concert pitch. Professor Frederick Jewell, soloist, drawn by six musical horses from Floto's equine college at Denver."

On show day, Thursday, July 13, a reporter for the *Wellington Daily News* checked every parade feature against the published list and found no discrepancies. He also reported the presence of H.H. Tammen but gave no reason for the visit.

The *Wichita Daily Eagle* on the 12th commented, "The parade was short and enjoyable, the calliope crowding the elephants, which in turn gave the camels such a chase as to give the riders barely time to get their breath between humps."

A reporter on the *Winfield Courier* counted six elephants and ten camels.

The *Arkansas City Traveler* said, "Everything about the parade left a good impression upon the crowd that gathered to witness it. It seems to be right up to the minute. The steam calliope player even, is the best we ever heard here. He is an artist." The artist was Fred Jewell.

No matter how great the artist, there are times when things go wrong, as reported by the *Cherryvale Daily Republican*, July 21, "The calliope operator had trouble with his machine this morning in the parade and it refused to work. Half the waiting crowd was disappointed and the other half correspondingly happy."



Ten of the Kansas papers that carried the parade line-up also published a time table for show day.

"10 a.m.—The parade is due to reach the downtown business district. Drivers and teamsters are especially politely requested to avoid this parade or have secure control of their horses.

"11 a.m.—Free open air shows and opening of annex departments of the show grounds. See the Japanese day-light fireworks.

"1 p.m.—Opening of the main entrance to the menagerie and big shows, allowing one hour to view the animals and courts. Promenade band concert by Sig Zierke's combined band of sixty musicians.

"2 p.m.—Grand Mysterious India spectacle and regular program. One hour to view menageries after the big show.

"4:15 p.m.—The specialty concert after the big show, introducing new features and the grand ballet, in novel dances.

"4:30 p.m.—Vallacita performs and feeds the big lions in a massive den in the annex.

"7 p.m.—Opening of the main entrance to the menagerie and big show for the night exhibition. One hour to view the menagerie. Fine band concert.

"8 p.m.—The night show begins. Grand Oriental pageant and Asiatic display enhanced by the electric lights and colored by fire, adding a more vivid and realistic hue to the gorgeous pageant. The long program commences with Sugimoto's wonderful Japanese acrobatic troupe, the finest in the world. In case of inclement weather the waterproof tents insure perfect protection and comfort."

This story and newspaper ads always gave parade time and "10 a.m.," but reviews written on show day by the Floto agents frequently mentioned that the parade took place "promptly at 10:30 o'clock."

One of the first handouts to appear in ten Kansas towns was invariably captioned "Big Circus Coming," and described in generalities how everything about the Great Floto Shows this year was bigger and better than ever before. The public was encouraged to visit the lot and see the Floto horses, "the talk of all America;" the culinary department where over six hundred people are served three times a day; the blacksmith shops; the electric plant; the new menagerie. The story bragged of new cages, new rolling stock "all bright in gold and silver," new and novel acts with "hundreds of skilled performers."

"The children will be delighted with the miniature menagerie, with boy trainers, drivers and care-takers."

The thrust of the story, an attempt to bolster matinee attendance, was contained in the first paragraph.



John Carroll, parade marshal, drove this carriage leading the 1905 Floto parade. J.W. Beggs collection.

"The capacity of the big tents is always tested during the Floto Shows' engagement, and if Uncle Henry and Aunt Betsy desire much comfort and more peace of mind, it would be best to allow the children to bring them to the afternoon exhibition, where the new menagerie can be seen to a much better advantage and more time given to absorb the descriptive knowledge so pleasantly unfolded by the gentlemanly lecturers."

Akin to the above story was one used in Dodge City, Wichita and Olathe which, after extolling the spec, "Mysterious India," continued,

"There are really two circus troupes which have to travel about. The leapers are liable to injury. A sprained ankle will put one of the best performers out and there must be a man to take his place. Possibly the substitute will make as great a hit as the regular. Even the performing horses have their substitutes."

"It is fact not generally known that the Great Floto Show carries two complete large canvasses. In case one is

A pony cage and the steam calliope are shown as a 1905 Floto parade was about to leave the lot. J.W. Beggs collection.



destroyed by fire or storm another must be ready to put up. When a failure to give a performance entails a loss of from \$10,000 to \$20,000 for expenses the matter becomes serious."

It is not unusual for a show to carry a spare big top, but to claim a nut of \$10,000 to \$20,000 for a 22-car show in 1905 is preposterous.

Featured in every newspaper advertisement, "TO DAZZLE AMERICA'S MILLIONS WITH THE SPLENDOR OF THE ORIENT," was the opening spectacular "New \$100,000 Awe-Inspiring, Gorgeous Mysterious India."

In a story published in ten Kansas towns regarding "Mysterious India," the press department raped its English grammar.

"The grand, gorgeous and sublime spectacle 'Mysterious India' in which the whole world's collection of strange and interesting people are actual participants, and which is complete in senographic effect, typical production of Oriental personages and traditional events, prolific in pageantic and processional features, lavish in entrancing ballets and terpsichorean divertissement, rich in trappings and appointments, requiring for its production the largest outlay of money ever invested in any traveling spectacle and conspicuously portraying historical events in Oriental tradition."





The Oriental tableau pulled by a Brahma bull in the 1905 parade in Horton, Kansas. Kansas Collection.

The Durbar of Delhi, January 7, 1903, was probably the most magnificent celebration in the history of the British empire, and this was the source of "Mysterious India."

A typographical error in the last paragraph of the handout, as published by the *Iola Register*, July 13, gave the story a grain of truth.

"The grand traditional allegorical spectacular production, 'Mysterious India,' is the most impressive and eminently moral and mind elevating historical spectacle, a pageant and cynical (sic) reproduction, gorgeous costumes, calcium, electric and radium effects, grand ballets will be given at each and every production. Will be at Iola, Thursday, July 20."

Despite the ads and the handouts, none of the reviews of the show mentioned "Mysterious India."

Press agents love numbers and are suspected of carrying a special hat to pull them out of. The *Wichita Daily Beacon* reported that the show had a daily expense of \$2,500; employed 570 people on the show and another 82 ahead; 300 horses and 70 ponies valued at \$250,000; eight elephants; a staff of 26 under the direction of Manager Frank Tammen; spent \$250 per week on laundry; had 15 cooks

who prepared 1,000 lbs. of meat daily; and 36 waiters.

For the next stand, Wellington, the *Sumner County Star* reported only six cooks and 20 waiters. The *Star* included the additional "facts" that the show had 220 laborers; 36 department heads; 110 women of whom 65 were ballet girls; 71 Elks; five detectives; required ten acres of land and drove 5,000 stakes every day. An identical story appeared in the *Leavenworth Times*.

Another set of fresh-from-the-hat statistics was used in Hutchinson, El Dorado and twice in Cherryvale in a handout reputedly an interview with "Capt. Henry Amberg, the foreign animal agent for the Great Floto Shows," in which Amberg gave the following report of his recent activities:

"The record of imports of the Floto Shows for the past year is twenty elephants, twenty-five camels, twenty tigers, five lions, forty-five leopards, twenty pumas, eighteen panthers and any number of small animals and birds."

Other press-book stories used more than once in Kansas included:

"Helps Business." The circus brings people to town who have money to spend. What the towners spend is

**The Great Floto steam calliope was played by Fred Jewell, and was drawn by six black horses. Kansas Collection.**



A small cross cage pulled by six ponies in the 1905 Great Floto parade. Kansas Collection.

returned by the show in purchases from local merchants. The money the show takes out of town is the money spent by the out-of-towners.

"Elephant's Friend." A maudlin account of a small circus child who befriended an elephant. When a bear attacked the little girl, the elephant saved her life.

"Unloading." How thorough organization makes easy the task of loading and unloading the circus train.

"Japanese Daylight Fireworks." A free show on the circus lot following the parade. In broad daylight the Japanese fireworks are as brilliant as if seen in darkness.

Three slightly different stories concerning the growth and quality of the menagerie were used in eleven towns.

"What Circus Horses Know." How circus horses know the daily routine as well as their teamsters know it. How they know what wagon goes in which location and where to fall-in for the parade.

"Circus Rings." Rings must have an unvarying diameter of 21 feet four and a half inches. horses and riders are both trained to work within this area.

An essay by "Alan Rogers, the greatest realistic writer and critic in the south," was published four times in Kansas. Some of his comments will strike a chord in the hearts of today's circus fans.

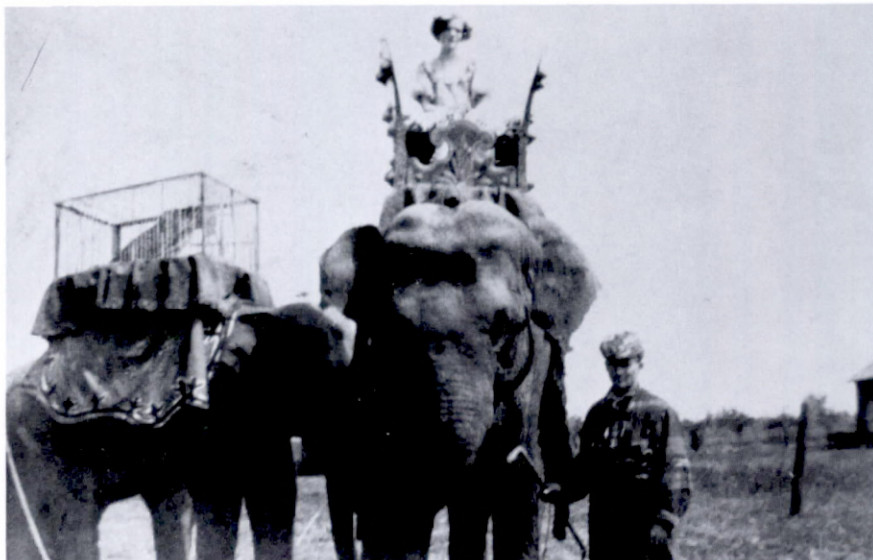
"Show us the man with soul so dead that he does not feel the least bit of thrill when the circus comes to town and we will show you a confirmed cynic. For the man who elevates his proboscis at the circus not only admits that he isn't young and never has been, but further advertises the fact that he has no sympathy with youth."

And,

"Therefore the circus is your true test as to whether your neighbor is a human or not. One who had become thoroughly disillusioned is not only a







heavy weight upon himself, but wearing on his acquaintance as well, and it is a false sympathy which regrets his suicide. If a man claims that the circus bores him, it is because all the freshness is gone out of his nature and by the same token he is a bore himself."

Five papers carried a story about the 25 clowns on the show.

Some handouts appeared only once in Kansas. The *Wichita Daily Beacon* had a rambling story about Henry Davis, MD, the circus doctor which may or may not be true. The *Hutchinson Daily Bee* under the heading of "Circus Woman" described a day in the life of a woman trouper. The *Galena Evening Times* told what a holiday it would be for everyone, even if the performance was missed.

The Ben Hur herd which had been the center of publicity in 1903 was featured only once in 1905. The handout appeared in the *El Dorado Advocate*.

Among the 14 stories used in the *Ottawa Daily Republic* were nearly all of the stock tales but to use up the space available the press department supplied handouts covering diving elephants, a lion cub used to illustrate a bible story in a Denver Sunday School, water proof tents, and an essay by Opie Reed, one of which appeared in any other paper in Kansas.

Only five of the Kansas newspapers used any photographs. A four-horse chariot was reproduced in the *Hutchinson Weekly News*. The *Iola Register*, a bullock hitched to a cart. A montage of clowns appeared in the *Miami Republican*, Paola, and again in the *Ottawa Evening Herald*. The *Ottawa Daily Republic* carried a photograph of six elephants.

The press agent's job did not end with the arrival of the show train for in addition to wining and dining the

The Queen of the Floto parade rode in an embossed copper houdah on the elephant Mamma Mary. On the left is Freda with a leopard cage houdah. Otto Scheiman collection.

local reporters and handing out passes, he frequently wrote the account of the parade and the matinee which appeared in the evening papers, and if that were not enough, the circus man would write a review of the performance to be published after the show left town.

These press agent stories were difficult to detect if one read only his local paper. One clue was the absence of anything derogatory, but this might pass unnoticed by the casual reader.

When the stories from different towns are compared the press agent

The elephants appeared in the middle of the Floto parade, not in the traditional last place. Kansas Collection.



becomes obvious through the general tone of the story, the utilization of identical or strongly similar subjects and particularly in favorite phrases used over and over.

"The parade was promptly on time and was indeed a gorgeous and splendid one. Music from many instruments was rendered, and the melody was wafted away on the wings of the wind and thrilled with pleasure and ecstasy the responsive hearts of thousands of eager and attentive listeners."

So said the *Winfield Daily Courier*, the *Walnut Valley Times*, El Dorado, and the *Cherryvale Republican* in stories published on show day.

The show and the papers gambled that all would go well and nothing would happen to embarrass the editors or prove them liars and in all the Kansas towns where the press agent wrote the review, nothing did.

In identical stories in the *Wichita Daily Beacon* and the *Wellington Daily News* published the day after the exhibition, the press agent wrote,

"You'd Otto C. Floto's circus if it ever comes back to town and you have not already seen it. It is without doubt superior to any circus traveling the United States for the price of admission."

The title for this series is taken from the pun in the first sentence.

The reviews written by local reporters are of greater interest and carry a ring of truth.

"Good crowds saw both the afternoon and evening performances. At the opening in the evening the master of ceremonies announced that the band would play a selection by Harry Holaday of Hutchinson, and the musicians then rendered Harry's latest new march, 'The Travelers' which is dedicated to Hutchinson council No. 34, United Commercial Travelers. It was a swell piece and the people showed their approval by generous applause."





The Pacheco Family of acrobats were featured with the Great Floto Show in 1905. Otto Scheiman collection.

*Hutchinson Daily Independent.*

The *Parsons Daily Sun's* reporter was also impressed by the band and on show day he wrote,

"People lined the streets from one end of the paving district to the other and their eyes bulged out terribly when the trombone players and the few others who make up the band went by in the big wagons. A trombone player is about enough to make up a band as a usual thing, but the Floto people have gone one better and have raised the limit and taken in a few alto players to make good. The bands were noisy, but noise was not the whole thing, either, for their music sounded good in the streets, and when the whole aggregation gets together, in the grand concert, played just before the performance begins, it is worth the time spent to get there and hear all that is to be heard."

The reporter closed his story with, "To get all there is in it, it is a good idea to go early tonight and hear the big band play. This will be about 7

o'clock and there will be music to please any and all of the folks. It will be the thing to go early and hear the band."

There was no mention of any performers and one gets the feeling the reporter spent the entire matinee in the back yard listening to the music.

The *Wichita Eagle* also had praise for the band, but ended its review with a moderately adverse criticism of the performance.

"With the exception of an idle ring for half the performance and a few other aggravating shortcomings, the program was carried out with dispatch and introduced some novel features, even a clown act which did not consist of the megaphoning of stale newspaper wit."

The *Wellington Daily News* took a different view.

"The family of seven acrobats, the Pacheco family, draw a salary of \$300 a week. They are not so good as the tumblers with the Hall show. (William P. Hall Shows, Thursday, June 22.) Of

The flat cars of the Great Floto Show are pictured during the 1905 season. Otto Scheiman collection.



Chris Zeitz, with dog, and the elephant and animal men on the Great Floto Shows in 1905. Pfening Archives.

the three dressed as women, the middle-sized one is a man."

"The five Japs get a salary of \$250 a week. The head of the troupe is Sigimoto. The littlest boy is known as 'Tots' and is 8 years old. The next largest is 16 is called 'Tom.'"

Where the *Daily News* got its figures is not explained.

There are two statements in the story that were echoed wherever the show appeared in Kansas.

"The Floto horses are not excelled by any show on the road."

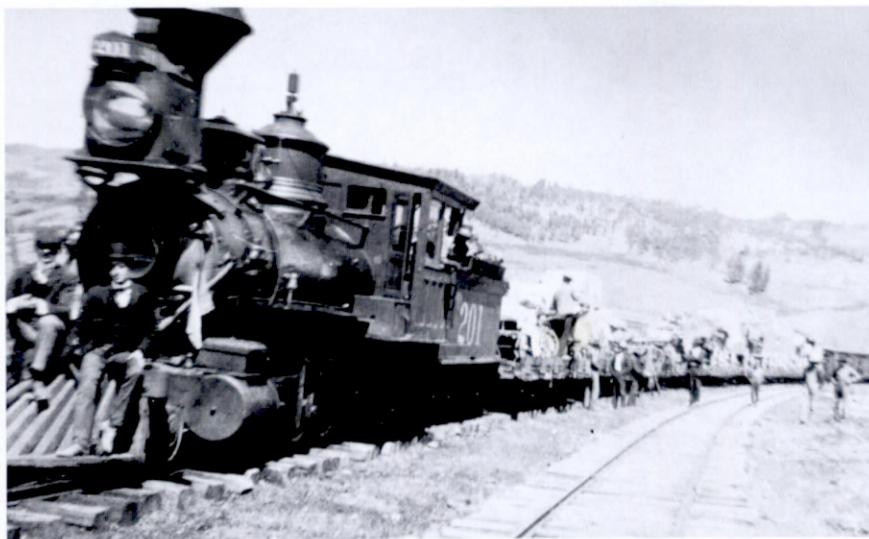
"No cleaner circus has ever visited Wellington than Floto."

The *Emporia Gazette* in 1905 was without a peer among Kansas newspapers and what it had to say about the Floto Shows bears extra weight.

"Although there was a circus here but a few weeks ago, the Floto show yesterday was attended by big crowds at both the afternoon and evening performances. Conspicuous by their absence were the grafters. It is safe to say that the Floto show was the cleanest show that has visited Emporia in years. It allows no grafters to accompany it, and yesterday the officers on the show ground heard of no complaint of men losing money on chance games in the side show. Most side shows are made up principally of gambling devices and hoochey-koochey dancing neither of which were featured by the Floto show.

"The Floto menagerie is small in comparison with that of some circuses, but what it has is the 'best ever.' Especially worthy of mention is the herd of camels, and the half dozen elephants that appeared in the show and went through their drill as precisely as a corps of soldiers.

"The Floto clowns had a few new stunts but were not as funny as they might have been. The clown costumes were 'catchey.' As one judges the standing of a circus greatly by the ap-







The clown patrol wagon pulled by two black ponies in the Horton parade. Kansas Collection.



Two small parade vehicles, one pulled by a llama, the other by a sacred cow. Kansas Collection.

pearance of costumes, the Floto show is fortunate in paying particular attention to dress. The dress suit actors wilted their white shirts at the rate of one every turn, but appeared span new each time."

The *Ottawa Evening Herald* reported that the show was on four coaches, five animals cars and eleven flats.

The show created little excitement in the Ft. Scott *Tribune* before it arrived and during its stay, but the move on the Frisco to Paola, Tuesday, August 1, provided all of the area newspapers with genuine news and the show received columns of free publicity of an undesirable kind.

James P. O'Byrne and George H. Saylor had one thing in common—both were murdered on the same night on the same stretch of Frisco tracks between Ft. Scott and Paola. O'Byrne was an employee of the railroad and his death was in no way involved with the circus. Saylor, however, was murdered aboard the Floto train and his body thrown off near Pleasanton.

The body was taken to the town hall in Pleasanton and a coroner's jury summoned. On the body were found a "silver watch, gold ring, small vial of

drugs, two pieces of plug tobacco, pencil, two pocketbooks, in one of which was a penny and the other a nickel, notebook, and other small articles." Badge No. 146 was also on the body.

The jury arrived at the following personal description of Saylor. "He was a man about forty years of age, five feet seven or eight inches tall, brown hair, with a cork (right) leg; left arm tattooed with an American flag and other devices; smoothly shaven and clad in laboring men's clothes."

It was the verdict of the jury that "the deceased came to his death from the effects of a blunt instrument in the hands of an unknown person or persons." The *Pleasanton Herald* reported that his neck was broken.

Sheriff Preston's investigation ran into a problem that has given ulcers to many a policeman on a show lot. Preston visited the show in Paola in an attempt to identify the murderer, but no one knew anything. There were hearsay reports that Saylor on his last night on earth had a long quarrel with a clown. The management stated that Saylor had been fired in Ft. Scott for drunkenness and fighting. The clown, too, was fired. No name was reported for the clown and no one had the faintest idea of his whereabouts.

The only kin located was Andrew Saylor in Chicago who refused to ac-

cept the body. George Saylor was buried in the Pleasanton cemetery. No one was ever arrested.

The *Olathe Mirror*, Wednesday, July 19, gave scant attention to the show and reported, "The Floto show in all their glitter-tinsel and pomp were here yesterday and the small boy was in his element." On the 27th the *Mirror* reported for the benefit of those who could stand the excitement that, "Ora and Ruth Benson of Zarch, were visiting the family of G.W. Anderson, Wednesday of last week and attended the Floto circus."

The show played to small houses in Leavenworth, Thursday, August 3 and Atchison on the 4th before jumping to St. Joseph, Mo., on Saturday.

The last date in Kansas was Monday, August 7, at Horton, where Floto played day and date against the Great Alamo Shows, a carnival which opened a week's run on the 7th. Despite the competition the show drew good crowds and excellent reviews.

A small story in the *Horton Headlight*, August 10, reported that Manager Frank Robertson of the Floto Shows accidentally discovered his



## THE CIRCUS WORLD OF WILLIE SELLS

By Orin C. King

Never before published account of circuses in Topeka, KS, 1858-1908, including Topeka-based shows: Fulford & Co., Sieber & Co., W.L. Cole, J.M. Barry's Great American, Col. Spicer, Kinnebrew Bros., Sells & Andress, Sells London, Sells & Renfrow, Sells & Gray, Sells & Downs, Sells Bros. Winter Quarters, AND MUCH MORE. Profusely illustrated including two Sells Bros. posters (1880s) in full color. 200 pages. Soft covers. October delivery. Pre-publication price, \$7.95 postpaid.

Remit to Shawnee County Historical Society  
Box 56, Topeka, KS 66601



Generally crowds were good in Kansas and the show must have earned a good profit. Admission for all but four of the Kansas dates was twenty-five cents, but at Olathe, Cherryvale, Paola

The herald used by the Great Floto Shows in 1905 featured the animals on the show. It was printed by the Smith Brooks Printing Company of Denver, Colorado. Pfening Archives.

# THE GREAT FLOTO SHOWS

## CIRCUS BEAUTIFUL & MAMMOTH MENAGERIE

To Dazzle America's Millions with the Splendor of the Orient!

New \$100,000 Anti-Inflating, Gorgonzoni

### MYSTERIOUS INDIA

A BLITTERING, GLEAMING, BEJEWELED THRONG

### TREMENDOUS TITANIC TUSKERS

TWICE DAILY EXHIBIT THEIR ALMOST HUMAN INTELLIGENCE

Performing every conceivable and inconceivable feat, doubling the greatest capacity and accomplishing the most difficult acts.

Two rings simultaneously filled with these towering trained actors, dancing to music made, setting, juggling, cartoon experts, standing and walking on their heads, in ice their head legs, building and from, fire, acrobats, pyramids and stunts.

500 Performers and People

285 Horses and Ponies

24-FUNNY CLOWNS-24

50 MUSICIAN

3 BANDS

2 HERDS OF ELEPHANTS

Brilliant, Glorious, Spectacular, Hundreds of Clubs and Tents, Banners and Copper

14-Don Her Arabian Stallions-14

BIG NEW 200 OF RARE AND CURIOUS ANIMALS

Llamas and Sacred Cattle

EXQUISITE GRAND BALLET DIVERT SEMENT

BRILLIANT CARTS OF GOLD AND PLUM IN BULLDOGS COVERED WITH SILVER SCALLES

ENCHANTING, ACCOMPLISHED, BEAUTIFUL, LITHE AND GRACEFUL REVELLING DANCING GIRLS

NEW FEATURES INNOVATIONS REVOLUTIONS AND REAL NOVELTIES

Decorated with GORGONZONI and FULL OF TRIUMPHS OF EVERY KIND

Caveats of Comedy and Dramatics

NOTE THE SIZE OF THIS SHOW

Gigantic Pavilion

Waterproof Tents

Covering Eight Acres of Ground



### Priceless Animals from Jungle and Plain



### THE GREAT FLOTO SHOWS' MONSTER STREET PARADE



10 O'CLOCK EVERY MORNING STREET PARADE AND CARNIVAL

Wild Races in Open Carts

Pyramid Stunts

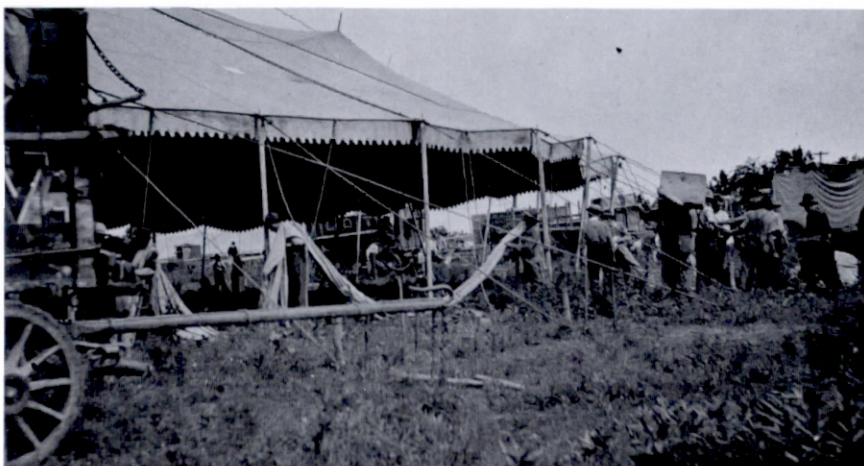
Exquisite, Comical and

Amusing

Funny Monkeys

Realistic Photos

A GRAND, FREE OUTSIDE EXHIBITION ON THE CIRCUS GROUND IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE STREET PARADE



This 1905 Floto photo shows the big top being guyed out and the side wall being put in place. Kansas Collection.

show returned to Kansas in 1906 as Sells-Floto its success was a sure thing.

and Ottawa, the ticket was boosted to fifty cents.

More important than the money was the reputation the show established in Kansas for cleanliness, honesty and a bountiful return on the price of admission. The Kansas tour was nothing less than a triumph, and when the

Research funded in part by grants from:

Wolfe's Camera Shops, Inc.,  
Topeka Kansas  
First National Bank of Topeka,  
Kansas

**CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY STATEMENT**  
May 1, 1982 thru April 30, 1983

Balance in First National Bank May 1, 1982		673.78
Receipts:		
Dues	18416.10	
Subscriptions	2642.00	
Back Issue Sales	1218.00	
Advertising	1887.00	
Convention	3205.00	
Bank Interest	576.25	
Total Receipts		27944.35
Grand Total		28618.13
Disbursements:		
Bandwagon Printing	21491.23	
Bandwagon Postage	750.00	
Bandwagon Mailing Expense	642.84	
Sec'y-Treas. Postage	450.00	
Convention Expense	2461.14	
Canadian Exchange & Bank Service Charge	97.29	
Misc. Expense	363.49	
Total Disbursements		26255.99
Balance April 30, 1983		2362.14
First National Bank Checking Acct.		1362.14
Mutual Federal Money Market Acct.		1000.00
		2362.14

Audited Statement prepared by:  
Gerald F. Combs  
July 31, 1983



# CIRCUS WAGON HISTORY FILE

## The W.C. Coup Steam Organ Wagon

by Fred Dahlinger, Jr.

### Part II

Similar to the false front buildings which graced the streets of Victorian America with inflated facades, circus proprietors of the mid 1800's extended the display height of their featured parade wagons by means of vertical decorated panels attached to the roof of the wagon. These panels have come to be known as "skyboards" because they pointed upwards, toward the sky. Their counterparts below, the mudboards, acquired their name by similar reasoning, being exposed to the earth upon which the wagons rolled. How early these terms came into common use is not known.

Large skyboards measuring four to five feet tall were utilized as early as 1850, the date of a lithograph showing an example of this decorative device on the "Automatodeon" organ wagon on G.C. Quick & Co.'s Menagerie.<sup>1</sup> It is believed similar skyboards graced the Spalding & Rogers Apollonicon of 1849 and the 1851 Car of Juggernaut of the P.T. Barnum Caravan.<sup>2</sup> While each of these vehicles is portrayed in advertising materials, no photographs of any of these vehicles has been found. To present a photographic example of such a skyboard, the clock must be advanced twenty-six years. If one closely examines the 1876 Cooper & Bailey parade mount, it can be seen that the big cage which served as the lead bandwagon was a box shaped affair which bore skyboards measuring approximately three feet high.

A later example is the mirror tableau captured in a circa 1888 parade at Richmond, Virginia.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately the circus which fielded this particular vehicle has not been identified, but the example shows that these later boards were painted, and possibly folded down over the mirrors when not in parade.<sup>4</sup> These skyboards are estimated to have been four to five



Many circuses paraded wagons with huge skyboards. W.C. Coup's organ wagon was one of them; another was this wagon appearing on this unidentified show in Richmond, Virginia about 1888. Photo from the Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia.

feet tall, increasing the basic wagon height about 50%.

The foregoing introduction serves as an entrance for a significant observation made by Stuart Thayer concerning the skyboards of the W.C.

Coup organ wagon whose history was published in the March-April 1983 *Bandwagon*. Close examination of the cut in the 1881 Coup courier depicting

This small tableau, shown here on Ringling Bros. in Black River Falls, Wisconsin on 17 August 1892, was built from the skyboard of the Coup organ wagon. The rebuilding was done on the Forepaugh show, and is one of the very few examples of a parade wagon being built from the skyboard of another wagon. Photo from State Historical Society of Wisconsin.



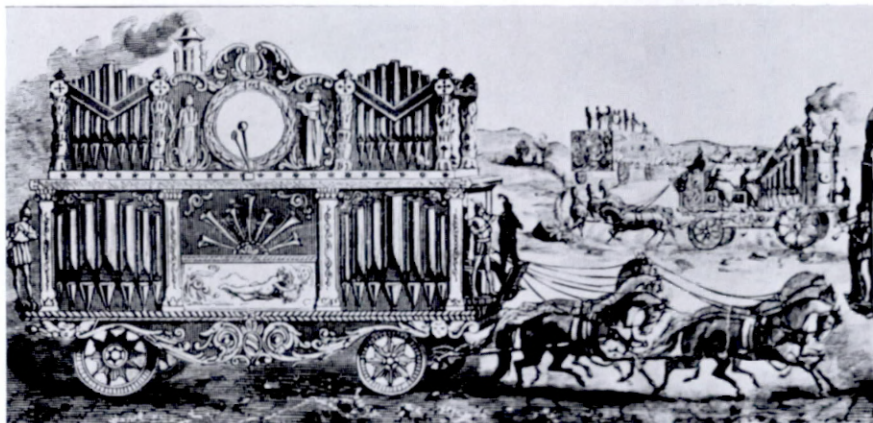


this wagon reveals the presence of a circular carved wreath flanked by carved musicians. At the ends are carved posts on either side of a rank of pipes. The carved display, minus the organ pipes, can be found on the sides of a small tableau wagon originally on the Adam Forepaugh circus, but which is best known as the Ringling clown bandwagon from c. 1892 to 1918. An interesting part of the discovery is that the figures which flanked the wreath still exist, allowing an estimate of the wagon's overall height to be made.<sup>6</sup> The figures measure 49½ inches tall, pointing towards an overall wagon height of 13½ feet.

Rationalizing how the Coup organ wagon skyboard carvings became the decoration on the small tableau which Forepaugh sold to the Ringlings by 1892 is not difficult. Forepaugh had two extremely tall tableaus in the 1880's, the Gem Bossed Car of Freedom and the St. George and the Dra-



The Ringlings rebuilt this wagon many times. This 1902 photo shows the fine carving in detail. These statues are still in existence. Albert Conover negative from the Baker Young Collection.



Close-up of illustration from 1881 W.C. Coup courier. A comparison between this wagon's skyboard and the wagon in the 1892 Ringling Black River Falls parade photo will show that they are identical. Circus World Museum Collection.

River Falls, Wisconsin, on August 17, 1892.<sup>8</sup> It received a minor rebuild between 1894 and 1900, and by 1903 a completely new body had been built to carry the Coup carvings. In this form it rolled in the Ringling parades through 1918. Stored at Bridgeport

gon, both of which were "decapitated" by the early 1890's due to ever increasing interference with utility wires. Since it is probable the ex-Coup organ wagon had a telescoping top layer, it is likely it too was shortened by Forepaugh, possibly in conjunction with the removal of the barrel organ which was no longer serviceable or unusual.

Forepaugh sold the little tableau fitted with the skyboard carvings to the Ringlings by 1892, the wagon appearing in the Ringling parade at Black

until 1925, on December 31 of that year it was sold to George Christy. Christy moved it from Bridgeport to a Fairfield, Connecticut, field where it was abandoned about 1931. After the salvage of some of the carvings, including removal of three of the carved figures, the wagon was apparently destroyed.<sup>7</sup>

1. New York Historical Society, New York, New York.
2. *American Whig*, (Taunton, MA.), June 26, 1851.
3. Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia, courtesy C.P. Fox.
4. It has been speculated that the parade is that of Frank A. Robbins.
5. At the time the figures were measured they were owned by William Warren.
6. State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.
7. Richard E. Conover's monograph, "The Early Ringling Raller" in *Bandwagon*, XI, 2, pp. 4-8, first aligned the Ringling clown bandwagon with Forepaugh and supplied the majority of the data in this paragraph. Conover's paper was based upon an important photograph in the Joseph T. Bradbury collection.





# James Raymond's Four Elephant Team

by Stuart Thayer

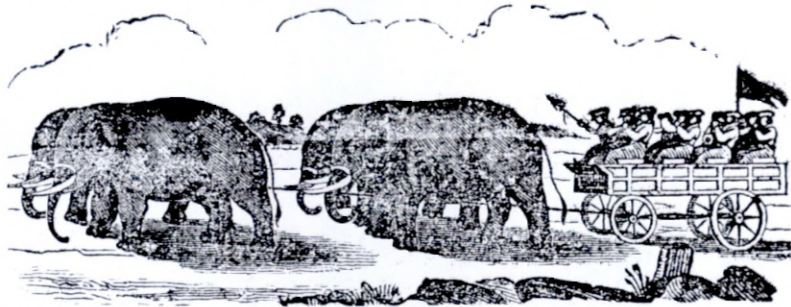
The elephant has been the single most popular species of wild animal to be exhibited in America. To that we would like to add "and most profitable," but we lack the data to do so. Hackaliah Bailey certainly found them profitable. When his first elephant, Betty (since called "Old Bet"), was killed in 1816 he immediately arranged for another to be imported and for a third before that one arrived. In the next ten years, five more were brought in and by 1835 twenty-seven had been imported, four of which had died. At a round-figure value of \$10,000, the value of Romeo when he died in 1835, \$270,000 worth of elephants had been bought for exhibition at a time when skilled workers earned \$6.00 a week.

Originally, the animals were exhibited as single attractions. Late in 1819 Columbus, Bailey's third import, was in Cincinnati with a travelling menagerie. In the 1820's we find that elephants were generally allied with menageries. The Grand National Menagerie (the one that became June, Titus, Angevine & Co.) in 1832 was the first to feature two elephants, Romeo and a calf appropriately named Juliet. In 1834 three menageries had two of the animals and in 1835, first season of the Zoological Institute, five caravans were so supplied.

Then, in 1843 Raymond & Co. brought forth their great four elephant team. Four animals, not only parading together, but hitched to the bandwagon. Nothing like it had ever been seen before. The elephants were Columbus, Hannibal, Siam and Virginus. They appeared with the caravan through three seasons, 1843 to 1845.

James Raymond (1795-1854) was the dominant figure in the menagerie business in America from 1835 to his death. We believe he was the guiding hand behind the formation of the Zoological Institute, aided by his various partners. These were Hiram E. Waring, Chauncey Weeks and Darius Ogden. After the collapse of the Institute in 1837 these men owned or leased the majority of the caravans on the road. In every year from 1833 to 1850 they had two, sometimes three, shows on exhibit. They used such titles as Raymond, Weeks & Co.; Raymond & Waring; Waring & Raymond; Ogden, Weeks & Co. and Philadelphia Zoological Garden. In addition the menagerie

## GREAT ZOOLOGICAL EXHIBITION,



**W**ILL visit RUTLAND on Friday the 27th day of June 1845—the whole retinue of wild living Animals, from the Philadelphia Institute. On the entrance to Rutland on the morning of the 27th about 10 o'clock, the Great four Elephant team, will appear, drawing the Music, followed by some twenty waggons filled with Animals and drawn by seventy beautiful horses.

### HERR DRIESBACH

The Great tamer and Subduer of wild Animals is also attached to this Menagerie, with his Carnivorous family, fondling, caressing, magnetizing and even drives them in harness.

### Mlle. FANNY,

The largest living ORANG OUTANG, or Wild Woman of the forest, ever imported to this country, is engaged, and will be exhibited with the Menagerie on the 27th.

THERE is no subject that can be named in so few words, that embraces such an extent and variety of useful and interesting information as the natural history of the savage! creatures of the forest and desert. It includes within the range of its various objects, every thing that can invite the attention, or reward the enquiries of the natural philosopher, the student, or the casual wayfarer. It furnishes subjects for investigation, which have engaged the interests of the most gifted minds, during a period of more than four thousand years. It leads the mind back to the hour when the world was in infancy, and extends down to the discoveries of the present day. In this inoffensive exhibition, the whole animal kingdom, in all the multiplicity and variety of its objects, possessing sufficient interest, is brought to the actual view of the spectator, in a perfection and beauty not elsewhere found.

Doors open at 1 o'clock. Admission 25 cents.  
Canvass to hold 5000 people.

The four elephant team—consisting of Columbus, Hannibal, Siam, and Virginus—was featured in this ad from the *Rutland (Vermont) Herald* of June 26, 1845. This menagerie, owned by James Raymond, used the title Ogden, Weeks & Co. at other stands. Pfening Archives.

eries managed by Stephen Butler, Anson E. Foster, W. Seeley, R.D. Lines, Joseph E.M. Hobby and Hubbell & Co. were owned or leased by Raymond and his associates. All this is separate from the Zoological Institute of 1835-37.

The collapse of the menagerie monopoly, the Zoological Institute, a result of the Panic of 1837, was not the end of the bad economic times, but the

beginning. Nevertheless, James Raymond seemed determined to persevere in the idea of monopoly and, indeed, excepting June, Titus, Angevine & Co., his were the only menageries on tour after 1837. As the economy worsened the number of shows declined until, in 1843 there were but nine on the road. There had not been so few since 1831 when seven circuses and one menagerie started the season.

Eighteen-forty-two was such a disastrous year that June, Titus, Angevine & Co. went out of business after twelve seasons. They sold two of their three elephants, Siam and Virginus, to James Raymond. The Raymond interests already had four, Columbus,



Ann, Pizarro and Hannibal. With this purchase Raymond owned all six of the elephants on exhibit in 1843.

The effect of the hard times in 1842 on Raymond and his partners was to reduce their three menageries to two. In 1842 they had sent out R.D. Lines & Co., Hubbell & Co. and Waring, Raymond & Co. For 1843 their lineup was Raymond & Co. and the Philadelphia Zoological Garden. Someone devised the plan by which Ann and Pizarro would go with the Philadelphia caravan and the remaining four with Raymond & Co.

The individual histories of these animals would read like this:

#### Columbus

Imported December, 1817 on the ship of the same name. Owned by Hackaliah Bailey, George Brunn and Isaac Purdy. Exhibited as a single attraction until 1819. In 1832 J.R. and Wm. Howe, Jr. menagerie and in 1835 was with Zoological Institute, New York, unit number 1. In 1837 with Ludington's menagerie. In 1840 on Foster menagerie and circus and then Seeley's menagerie and circus (both of these were Raymond affiliates). R.D. Lines & Co. in 1841, which became Raymond & Co. late 1842.

#### Hannibal

Born ca. 1812, imported in 1824. By 1832 he was with Raymond

& Weeks' menagerie and remained in the Raymond circle. In 1842 was on Waring, Raymond & Co.

#### Siam

Imported in February, 1833, this elephant was leased to John Sears' New England Caravan, a show purchased by the Warings late in the same season. In the Zoological Institute, he was first with the Raymond unit and finally with the June, Titus, Angevine unit. He remained with the latter through their final year of 1842.

#### Virginus

Arrived in Boston in late 1835 and went out that fall with Miller, Yale & Sands. In 1836 was on the Baltimore unit of the Institute. In 1837 joined the S.B. June circus and menagerie, one of those auctioned that year in Somers, New York. Joined June, Titus, Angevine & Co. in 1839 and was there through 1842.

Jacob Driesbach was in his second year as lion trainer in 1843 and he was assigned to Raymond & Co. For that reason, the four elephant team did not receive the press notice that it might have otherwise. Driesbach was very popular and stories about him are in many newspapers of the time. However, when elephants acted up they were always sure copy. Columbus

badly injured two keepers in Philadelphia in April, 1844.

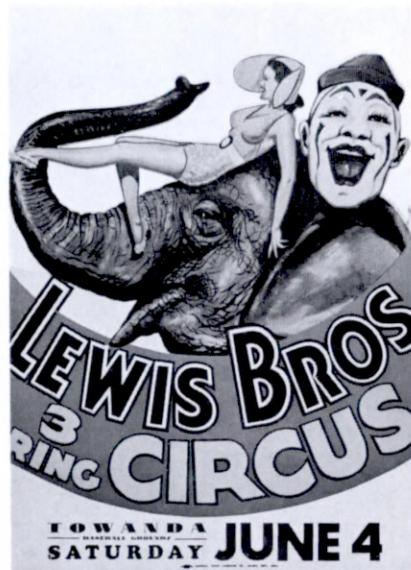
The elephants' keepers were under the supervision of Orrin "Put" Townsend (1810-1870), a very capable elephant boss, who had been in the business, at least in charge of an elephant, since 1836. In that year he handled Siam on the Raymond-owned Boston Lion Circus. Handling a four elephant herd must have required some expertise since no one had ever done it, and the Raymond company was fortunate to have Townsend. His presence may have led to the idea in the first place.

In parade the elephants wore blankets and were followed by nineteen cages and wagons. In the performance, which was mainly Driesbach's act, Siam was fitted with a howdah and gave rides to children from the audience.

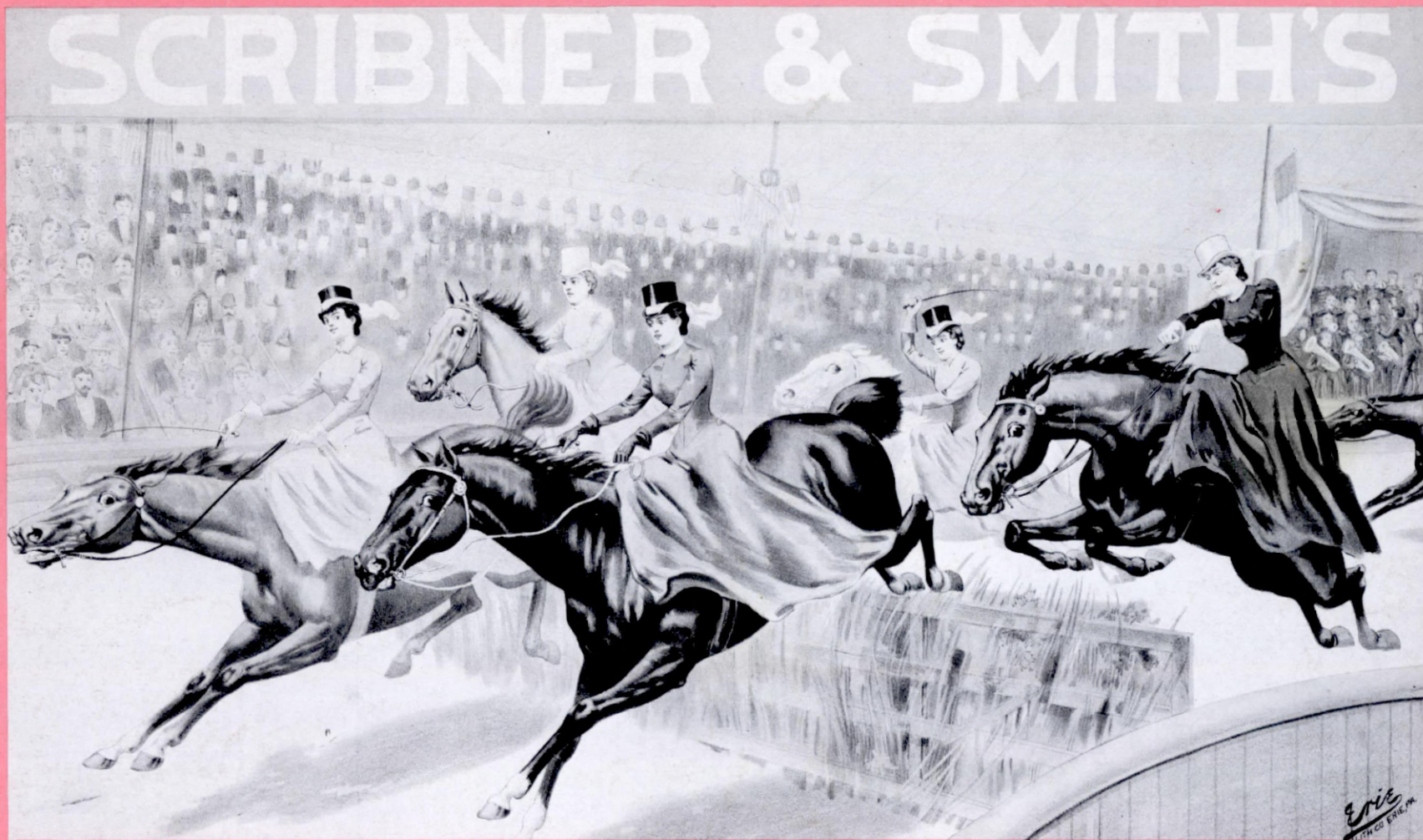
Raymond & Co. was re-titled Ogden, Weeks & Co. for 1845 and at the end of the season put into Zanesville, Ohio for the winter. It was here, in the Adams & Wheeler foundry building, that Siam died on December 23, 1845. That marked the end of the four elephant hitch.

The five remaining elephants were parcelled out between three shows in 1846. Business had been so good in 1845 that another caravan was added. Two of the menageries bore the same title, Raymond & Waring; one was routed into Ohio, the other into New York. The third show was called Raymond & Co. and spent most of the season in the South.

## CIRCUS WINDOW CARDS







The American circus reached its numeric peak in the 1890s as scores of small shows played cross-road towns and villages. Typical of these generally forgotten enterprises was the Scribner and Smith Circus, owned by Sam A. Scribner and Ned Smith. It toured from 1892 until 1896, and was based in Youngstown, Ohio. This poster, dating from 1892, is one of the earliest surviving examples of the work of Erie Lithograph, a firm which catered to the printing and advertising needs of smaller shows. The bill is in natural colors with the title in white on a red background. Pfening Archives.